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Wednesday, December 7, 2005 ● 36 pages / vol. 09 / no. 361

website: www.inq7.net

Threat closes US Embassy

Americans receive unspecified terror info

By Veli Contreras

THE US EMBASSY IN Manila closed down and suspended all its public services yesterday after receiving what it called "a plausible threat information."

On the basis of the embassy move, the Philippine National Police late last night placed its entire force in Metro Manila under full alert, ordering stepped up patrols by mobile motorcycle and HMO units.

Asked if the alert was connected to the threat against the US Embassy, National Capital police commander, Director Vidal Querol told the Inquirer, "Yes."

A statement issued by the embassy before it closed yesterday initially said visa, consular, social security and veterans affairs services would be resumed "when deemed appropriate later."

But when confined at around 4:30 p.m., US Press Attaché Matthew Lussenhop said the embassy would remain closed to the public today.

Lussenhop declined to give details of the threat. But the embassy statement reminded American citizens to remain vigilant amid "the continued potential for terrorist attacks" against them or against United States and other Western interests in the country.

It was the longest service disruption in the embassy in recent memory and occurred four days after the US government froze assets that three leaders of the extremist Abu Sayyaf might have under American jurisdiction.

"PLAUSIBLE THREAT INFORMATION" shuts down US Embassy on Tuesday suspending visa, passport and all other public transactions. Red alert loop, and security tight along the perimeter of the embassy compound on Roxas Boulevard in Ermita, Manila. The embassy remains closed today.

US intel czar in surprise visit to RP

By Veli Contreras and Nikko Dizon

US TOP SPOOK JOHN NEGROponte arrived unannounced yesterday afternoon at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

US Ivan Acosta Mathew Lussenhop sounded surprised to receive a call from the Inquirer announcing the arrival of the US director for national intelligence. But he confirmed Negroponte's presence here, although he provided scant details on the latter's mission.

Negroponte was appointed to his powerful post after the endorsement of President George W. Bush last year who put him on top of all the US intelligence agencies, including the controversial Central Intelligence Agency.

According to Lussenhop, the visit has "nothing to do with the threat" that the US Embassy said it received Monday night and which forced the two-day suspension of its consular and other public services. (Turn to story on p. 2, page 1)

Lussenhop said Negroponte, who was Washington's ambassador to Manila in 1981-86, [illegible]

Garci told talking to GMA is the main issue

By Michael Lim Ubac, Julie Lobo Cendaña and Philip C. Tubeza

WILL VIRGILIO GARCILLANO name his "premiere lady caller," Sen. Rodolfo Biazon asked yesterday on the eve of the former elections commissioner's ninth sworn appearance before a joint Senate investigative panel.

But Biazon also said that the wiretapped phone conversations purportedly between Garcillano and President Macapagal-Arroyo were more important than the more several dozen public statements made to Garcillano during last year's elections and which Garcillano threatened to expose.

The question Biazon asked was foremost in the minds of lawmakers interviewed yesterday by the Inquirer as Garcillano prepared to appear today before a joint hearing of two House committees [illegible]

'Hello Garci' tapes, according to Garci

By Michael Lim Ubac

MAJ GEN. Jovito Palparan bangs his head as his promotion is bypassed by the Commission on Appointments. Beside him, all reappointed more, from left, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Senga, Lt. Gen. Tesoloro and Lt. Gen. Bugarin

INSIDE THE INQUIRER

Carabao creator remains giddy kid at heart

By Alyn B. Henson
Editor, Sunday Inquirer Magazine

Enchanted evening: Tycoons watch 20 Guyitos unveiled

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2005
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Napocor granted power rate hike

By Abigail L. Ho

THE RATES OF STATE-OWNED POWER GENERator National Power Corp. (Napocor) will increase by as much as 12.23 centavos per kilowatt hour after Napocor obtained approval from state regulators to recover deferred generation, fuel and foreign exchange costs.

Napocor's rates for Luzon will increase by 12.23 centavos per kWh, for the Visayas by 8.31 centavos per kWh and for Mindanao by 6.10 centavos per kWh.

The Energy Regulation Commission (ERC) approved Napocor's then applications for approval of its fifth generation rate adjustment mechanism (Gram) and fourth incremental currency exchange rate adjustment (Icera), representing deferred accounting adjustments in its monthly billings or requirements for the period October 2004 to March 2005.

The quarterly Gram allows Napocor to recover fluctuations in the cost of the power that it buys from its independent power producers.

The Icera is a quarterly rate adjustment mechanism that allows Napocor to reflect foreign exchange fluctuations in its billings.

Napocor president Cyril del Callar explained that the rates that the ERC approved were only half of what the agency first applied for in mid-September.

"The approved represents part of the amount that we otherwise have to fund from other sources such as loans had they not been allowed and approved by the ERC," he said in a statement.

While Napocor would still have to tap the financial markets to address its yearly requirements, he said 2006 had not been a heavy borrowing year for the state firm as it took out loans amounting to only P500 million.

The rate of its requirements were raised incrementally or through other means.

Napocor is allowed to borrow as much as $1.5 billion a year to meet its financial requirements.

Del Callar said the Gram and Icera represented cost recoveries related to fuel and foreign exchange and were items charges to generation.

"These are pass-through costs. Napocor does not earn a single centavo from them," he explained.

He said the Gram and Icera were computed on the basis of actual and historical incurred costs from October 2004 to March 2005.

Instead of waiting to recover the Gram and Icera-deferred adjustments in full, Napocor has opted to stagger its recovery for periods ranging from 4 to 36 months, Del Callar said.

The most recent approved rate increases would enable Napocor to recover its fuel-related costs over 12 months in Luzon, six months in the Visayas and 14 months in Mindanao.

The Inquirer could not immediately secure a statement from the ERC.

Selling kidneys is no escape from poverty

By Christian V. Esguerra

ONE OF THEM PUT UP A BILLIARD HALL. Another built a house. A third one paid off his debts.

Each of them sold a kidney, raising school questions over the extreme case with which some people — given the right amount — can sell a vital organ.

"Many of the poor are [still] ignorant of how to invest money or are saddled by poor values and bad habits," Inquirer expat Dr. Angelito Tan Eleve said in her lecture yesterday at the International Congress on Bioethics at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila.

Elsewhere in India, one organ vendor spent the money on shirts and woolen while another used the amount for his wedding. Still another simply wanted to feel how it was "to live with money," she reported.

"Business deals or money is squandered and there is no escape from poverty," said Meta, former executive director of the Southeast Asian Center for Bioethics.

Her team questioned meticulous tracked the reddish issue at organ donation, which has spawned an informal market involving donors, recipients and middlemen.

"Organ transplantation is an increasingly successful and mainstream part of contemporary medicine," Bishop Anthony Pudens, auxiliary prelate of Sydney, said in a separate lecture.

"The problem is there are not enough organs to go around. What are we to do about that?"

Per Libelle, 1.08 to 200 per one million people suffer from end-stage renal disease, according to Meta, "Many [people] subsequent near-organs die while awaiting," she said.

In 2003, there were a total of 440 transplants, about 78 percent less than the needed operations, Meta said. Citing a study at the National Kidney and Transplant Institute, the said most of the kidneys (2,016 cases) from donors are related to the recipients, the most of them were paid in the process.

Transplant is one way of addressing the problem of a defective kidney. But an operation costs between P500,000 and P1 million. Medication costs between P500,000 and P600,000 a year while a kidney costs about P150,000, according to Meta.

The other recourse is dialysis, which runs from P4,000 to P9,000 per session. It's done twice weekly, she said. More than 6,000 were patients getting dialysis yearly in the country.

The selling of kidneys is apparently rampant in Baul Park, Bacood and Ramos compound in Manila; Sweetlodge, Quezon City, and Mabolo in Malabon, she said.

Cost-conscientiously has to fund 150 under with only one kidney, she said. A person is born with two kidneys.

It's take two for Mark Jimenez

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

IT'LL BE TAKE TWO FOR MARK Jimenez.

The former Manila congressman who served 14 months in a United States federal prison for tax fraud and making illegal campaign contributions will be deported to the Philippines on Dec. 11, sources privy to the new arrangements told the Inquirer.

And if he homecoming comes off without a hitch, drama is set to show on his big flight from New York.

Antipas 44 Jim Boy Pimentel Pelaez Jr and Manila Rep. Mary Elaine will be around to pick him up at the gate of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Pasay.

And he would land at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport on Dec. 15 like a VIP, with a "welcome ng committee" of his other congressional friends to escort him.

Pelaez told the Inquirer he and his son were just waiting for US government approval of their request to have Jimenez placed in their "custody" upon his discharge from prison.

He said they just wanted to join the controversial man a "home-coming" homecoming when he was humbled by his surrender, conviction and imprisonment in 2003.

Jimenez, whose original name was Mario Crespo, owned a company in the US where he got his trouble for making illegal campaign contributions to President Bill Clinton and the Democratic Party.

He returned to the Philippines in 1998 and quickly befriended President Joseph Estrada who appointed him adviser on Latin American affairs and described him as a "respectable person."

Fighting extradition

Indicted that same year in the US, Jimenez ran for Congress representing the sixth district of Manila and won, but then spent most of his time fighting extradition in the US.

Before he decided to surrender instead, Jimenez dumped then Justice Secretary Hernando Perez with enough $1 million from him in connection with the Smart phone project.

He said he also gave at least 9% million to a foundation belonging to President Macapagal-Arroyo and her husband, First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo.

In he did his time in a 63 prison, he was removed in Congress for failing the residency requirement when he was originally set to be freed on Nov. 25 and deported to the Philippines but his release was reportedly delayed after he reportedly gave some cheap gifts to his guards and fellow inmates.

Rep. Pelaez denied the report. "That is just talk," he said.

Earlier, House minority floor leader Antonio Villarroya said he would ask the Department of Foreign Affairs under arrangements with the US government to have Jimenez turned over to him, Pelaez and former Bukidnon Rep. Pedro Acharon when he is released so they could escort him to Manila.

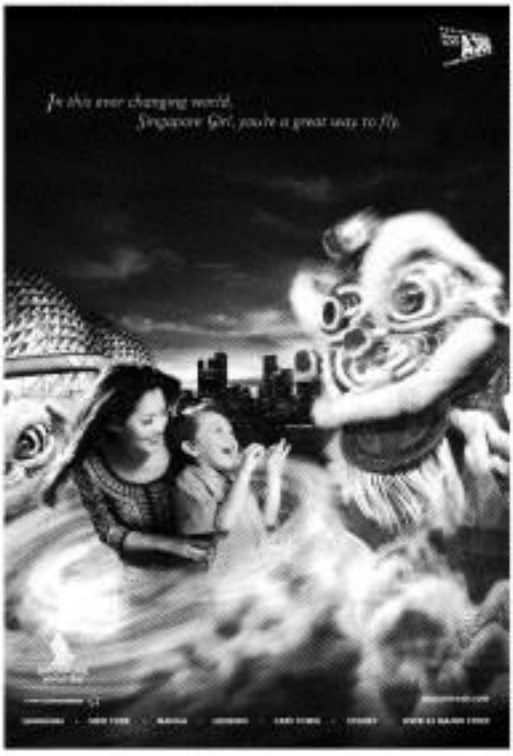
"I'm not sure if the US government will give us custody of Mark but as soon as the arrangements are made, we will go. I am a man honor[, I accompanied him on the 6th and I will bring him," Villarroya said.

Pelaez and Pelaez plan to leave for the US on Dec. 11.

Villarroya, however, was reportedly not to be joining the two.

On Nov. 21, when Jimenez was supposed to be arriving in Manila, Villarroya went up to Baguio City on official meeting.

It was Villarroya, President Arroyo's chief of staff when she was Vice President, who engineered the alleged $1 million extortion by Perez.



Christmas trees at Palace gates made from barbed wire

By Christine O. Avendaño

THERE IS STILL BARBED WIRE ON MALACAÑANG but it now makes up the Christmas trees adorning the Malacañang gate there.

Members of the Presidential Security Group (PSG) made a ceremony of lighting up the barbed wire Christmas trees yesterday.

The barbed wire used to block the Palace's Mendiola gate to keep protesters out.

But last week it was taken down along with other barricades put up around the Mendiola, easing complaints of the PSG's use of such to ring the Christmas season and declaring "a new atmosphere of peace."

Political crisis was over

Palace officials had said the lifting of the barriers was an indication the worst of the political crisis that has been fuelling the Arroyo administration since last year.

In a phone interview, PSG chief Col. Delfin Bangit said that removal of getting rid of it, his office decided to use the barbed wire to make the Christmas trees.

At Mendiola, five of the trees were put up, one of which stands 12 feet.

Bangit said students of La Consolacion College and College of the Holy Spirit, which are both near Malacañang, helped decorate the trees.

During their lighting, the PSG band played Christmas carols, attracting a crowd at Mendiola.

Bangit was overheard telling a man that at least the Christmas trees would be the first thing protesters planning to march on Mendiola calling today would see.

Release of political prisoners

Relatives of political prisoners will be accompanied by members of Task Force Detainees of the Philippines to Malacañang at 10 a.m. today to press for a dialogue with the President.

They said it would press for a dialogue for the release of political prisoners "with or without the President's approval."

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye was caught unaware about the group's plan to march to Malacañang. He said the TFDP will save out on the President's schedule today which he described as hectic.

"The PSG lifted the barricades last week and there is a reason for that. But as to values will happen [today] are really do not know," Bunye said. INQ @ GMA, Gobernacion.

Economy should spur Cha-cha — FVR

By Doris C. Dumlao

FORMER PRESIDENT FIDEL V. RAMOS YESterday said a faltering economy, not any political embroilment, should make it imperative to speed up efforts to amend the Constitution.

Ramos said the country's current economic performance was not enough to lift many Filipinos out of poverty.

"It is the economy that is on my view the engagement—not so much the political part of it. We're seeing that the gap between the rich and the poor in the Philippines is increasing," Ramos said at the sidelines of a forum of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines.

"Even a 5 percent GDP (gross domestic product) growth for any year is not enough. If we can have 6 to 7 percent GDP, all even Filipinos, the economy should grow by 6-8 percent every year for 10 to 15 years," Ramos said.

He added the recent appreciation of the peso to P54.85 was not good enough, saying the peso traded as early 20 during his term and hit a low of only 40 during the Asian currency crisis.

"Why don't we go back to those levels? Our currency used to be at par with Taiwan ($ dollar) and the Thailabu," he said.

RAMOS

But the Palace it satisfied with the pace of the country's economic growth.

"The chronic drain in the third quarter but the President did not take the economic managers to task. She found their explanation acceptable," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a briefing.

GDP dropped to 4.1 percent in the third quarter from 6.2 percent a year ago.

Ramos, who has been pushing for a parliamentary form of government and for GMA to run her term short, said he was supportive of initiatives to push Charter change through a constituent assembly. With Cid Cabanangan, Jr.

NAVY CHIEF

It's Mayuga, and it's final

By Doris Z. Pasibugan

AFTER SEEMINGLY SCUTTLING his embattled installation plan last Monday, Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. yesterday gave AFP Inspector General Vice Admiral Mateo Mayuga the green light to assume command of the Philippine Navy.

When reached by phone yesterday, Mayuga could not hide his relief at the official announcement issued by Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

"I felt a little anxiety there," he said, chuckling, when asked if he had misgivings about the last-minute change in the announcement that he would still be named the new Navy chief in the wake of Monday's assault.

Mayuga was supposed to have taken over as Navy chief from Vice Admiral Ernesto de Leon last Monday in ceremonies that had been announced a week before. But at 9 a.m., De Leon suddenly postponed the turnover "indefinitely" after Bunye said the President had not yet appointed anyone to the place of De Leon, who has gone on terminal leave prior to retiring in March.

Following Bunye's announcement of Mayuga's appointment, a Navy spokesman said the turnover would be held at 2 p.m. on Thursday at the Navy headquarters on Roxas Blvd., Manila.

Confident

Asked if he was confident there will be no more last-minute snags, Mayuga chuckled once more and answered, "I've always been confident."

AFP chief Gen. Generoso Senga sought to downplay the controversy over Monday's aborted naval command turnover.

Appearing before the Commission on Appointments yesterday, Senga said the top brass simply decided to put off the turnover as De Leon's successor had not yet been officially named.

"We decided to postpone the turnover ceremonies for the position of flag officer in command (OIC) Friday because as of yesterday we [had] not received a set of papers approving or affirming the new flag officer in command," he said.

When examined by Sen. Rodolfo Biazon that Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita himself had disclosed Mayuga's appointment in Navy chief last Tuesday, Senga said, "As I mentioned earlier, we have not received a written approval and, therefore, we could not proceed with the turnover."

Mayuga was Indian than his classmate in the Philippine Military Academy class '74, Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, who faced a similar predicament last September.

Esperon, who was then commander of the Armed Forces Southern Command, was all set to take over as chief of the AFP Southern Command. But on the eve of the turnover, Malacañang aborted the turnover and then announced that the new Southern chief was AFP Deputy Chief of Staff Ishmael Asher.

Esperon was later promoted and given the position vacated by Asher.

Timing

Timing is important for Mayuga. If not installed as Navy chief before Dec. 9, he would no longer qualify for the post as military rules provide that officers appointed to major service commands must have at least a year left in service. He is due to retire on Nov. 9, 2006.

De Leon reportedly went on extended leave starting Dec. 9, three months ahead of his retirement on March 22, to accommodate Mayuga. Had De Leon vacated the office as scheduled, Mayuga would not qualify.

Mayuga said it was up to the Board of Generals to decide whether he would stay on concurrently as AFP inspector general.

A decorated naval officer, Mayuga was the AFP deputy chief of staff for personnel (J-1) before he was named Inspector General last July 1. He had also served as the commander of the Naval Base Cavite in Sangley, Cavite.

Mayuga had trained on anti-submarine warfare in the United States. He also completed maritime studies in national security and policy at the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. He holds a master's degree in management from the Asian Institute of Management. With a report from TJ Burgonio

DA can't show it got P728-M fertilizer funds

By TJ Burgonio

OVER A YEAR AFTER SEN. Biazon's P728-million to congressmen and other government officials for the purchase of fertilizer and other farm inputs, the Department of Agriculture can't show proof it had gotten the money from the Department of Budget and Management.

Appearing at the budget deliberations in the Senate, agriculture officials yesterday admitted they didn't have a copy of the DA letter asking the DBM to release the fertilizer fund.

The disclosure baffled senators, who had opened an inquiry into the alleged misappropriation of the multimillion-peso fund widely suspected to have ended up in the campaign coffers of the officials and President Macapagal-Arroyo in the campaign for the May 2004 elections.

"There's a lot of mystery. Unthinkable events and circumstances are being presented to us and it's really something that puts one to wonder what has happened to this fund," Senator President Franklin Drilon said. He has asked reporters.

Under questioning by Drilon, Shiela Agustin, DA director for financial and management service, admitted the agency had not seen a copy of the letter requesting the release of the fund from the DBM.

"We were trying to look for that a long time ago, but we haven't seen any," she told the Senate committee of the whole.

When Drilon pressed if the document was missing, she said: "We can't find it, sir."

Agriculture Secretary Domingo Panganiban, who was also grilled on the fertilizer fund, assured the senators the department "would exhaust all possible means" to come up with a copy of the letter.

"When we get to the office we shall get the records from the budget. We don't have it now," he said.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2005

Rights group assails Singapore maids' plight

SINGAPORE—A HUMAN rights group urged Singapore yesterday to provide better legal protection for foreign maids, many of whom face "shameful" living hours, "pitiful" wages and conditions amounting to "forced labor."

About 150,000 women—mainly from Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka—work as maids in Singapore, with roughly one in every seven households employing a live-in worker as that couple can work and raise families.

The 134-page report by New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) is based on 90 interviews and case studies and documents instances of cruelty and abuse. It called on employers found to mistreat workers with Singapore government officials.

"A system that excludes a class of workers from labor protections, leaving them to work for 14 hours a day seven days a week, for painfully low wages is one that demands serious and meaningful reform," the report said.

By excluding maids from its Employment Act, Singapore's labor laws fail to comply with international law, it said.

"Singapore isn't the worst, but it's far from the best," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of HRW in a press conference.

Both said Singapore was in much weaker than Hong Kong, where domestic workers are included in their main labor laws, protecting their rights in a number of ways, such as a minimum wage, maximum hours, public holidays, and paid annual leave.

Singapore's Ministry of Manpower said the report "grossly exaggerates the abuse and lack of rights" of maids in Singapore.

"Do they earn more, [maids] choose to work in Singapore because of better conditions here compared to their home and other countries ... The majority of [maids] enjoy meaningful and safe employment in Singapore," the ministry said. Reuters, AP

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GE imagination at work

3 convicted of human trafficking

ZAMBOANGA CITY—THE FIRST CONVICtion under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 was handed down by Judge Anna Cardona of the regional trial court here.

On Nov. 29, Hadja Jamia Lalli, Bernie Ahijan and Dexter Belarmajan were found guilty of recruiting Marivel Jose for illegal work in Malaysia and sentenced to life imprisonment and ordered to pay a fine of P3.5 million each and at least P100,000 for damages.

Belarmajan is at large.

Based on court records, the three had recruited Marivel for employment as restaurant entertainer in Malaysia. Lalli and Belarmajan themselves escorted the girl to Malaysia.

Instead of the promised work, however, Marivel was forced to work as a prostitute from June 14 to July 8, 2005.

She was able to escape with the help of her sister who was also working in Malaysia and the sister's Indonesian husband.

On her return to Zamboanga City Marivel filed a complaint against the three recruiters and the help of the Public Attorney's Office.

Lalli and Ahijan were immediately arrested but Belarmajan could not be found. Rolly A. Ann Juan, PIA Mindanao/Zamboa

Family festival at Robinsons

THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY (TCL) WILL hold its 2nd annual Family Festival on Dec. 10 at the Robinsons Galleria Fountain Area from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Activities for the family festival will include storytelling sessions, theater productions and fun and games for the whole family. The event will be highlighted by the launch of sale of the International Quiz Bee Contest where students from various schools will engage in a battle of wits.

Children's books can also be bought at discounted prices at the book fair during the event. Part of the sales from the book fair will be donated to TCL's library enrichment projects.

TCL, a project of the Gokongwei Brothers Foundation, is the first multimedia learning center for children, which offers free access. TCL aims to contribute to the transformation of the growing child into a socially responsible person by inspiring good values, enhancing the child's natural creativity and by stimulating the child's thirst for knowledge.

The Children's Library centers are located at Robinsons Place in Bonifacio and Robinsons Place in Imus, Cavite. TCL also expanded its reach by providing TCL Corners, which offers educational facilities, to the Bataan and San Juan public libraries.

Nat'l Artist reburied at Libingan Monday

THE REMAINS OF NATIONAL ARTIST Willie Ho Bio Guevarra, which are buried at the Hardayanag Pilipino in Quezon City, will be reburied on Dec. 11 for re-interment at the Libingan ng mga Bayani.

An ecumenical vigil will be held at the Cathedral chapel of the University of the Philippines in Diliman starting at 7 p.m. on that day.

The remains will be transferred to the Sanctuary for National Artists at the Libingan ng mga Bayani, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, on Dec. 11 after the 9 a.m. Funeral Mass.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent for the #500-file Ms. Guevarra Memorial Scholarship Fund for Theater Arts, c/o Dept. of Speech Communication and Theater Arts, UP College of Arts and Letters, Diliman, Quezon City.

Inquiries may be made at that department, or call Frances S. Almendras at 527-2192 local 309, Lutzy Aguilar at 920-8589, or Rupie Tejas-Cayetano at 926-3601.

Saudi king vows support for peace in south

JEDDAH (HOUSE SPEAKER JOSE DE VEN...) discussed the peace process in Mindanao and global inter-faith dialogue and won endorsement for both in an unprecedented one-hour dialogue with King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz al-Saud, the new Saudi monarch, on Sunday evening in his city by the Red Sea.

De Venecia, who arrived here Friday night at the head of small Philippine delegation, met King Abdullah at the high point of his four-day official visit during which he also sought Saudi support for the Philippines' bid for observer status in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) as well as for a proposed second Iberian-Asiatico refinery in Mindanao and expansion and modernization of the existing refinery in Bataan.

De Venecia led a small delegation of House members in his meeting with the Saudi ruler where the Philippine Speaker became the first foreign leader to present King Abdullah with a national decoration, the Congressional Medal of Achievement given by the Philippine House of Representatives.

De Venecia's delegation included Reps. Francis Ayuso, Abdullah Dimaporo, Lorna Silverio, Imelda Cabilao and Wahab Akbar. Dimaporo, one of the powerful Muslim leaders in Mindanao, toed the mission.

During their meeting, the Saudi monarch, De Venecia said, expressed support for the emerging peace settlement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the last major secessionist group in Mindanao.

The peace process, which has also drawn support from the United States and Malaysia, could produce a final settlement in the next **six months**, paving say the international fair and enabling the government to launch an economic action plan for both Muslim and Christian communities of Mindanao, the Speaker said.

The economic action plan is aimed at developing Southern Philippines and strengthening the peace prospects in the region, he said.

Rosales rallies flock vs AIDS

By Christian V. Esguerra

MANILA ARCHBISHOP GAUDENCIO ROSALES yesterday rallied his flock behind the archdiocesan effort against AIDS.

Describing the disease as "the deepest wound" in society, the prelate called on the community to give help, love, kindness and compassion to people with AIDS.

"We cannot just turn our backs on them in the hope that if we pretend they don't exist, the disease will go away," he said in a statement.

Health experts describe the local AIDS problem as "hidden and growing." Although there are less than 3,000 recorded cases, they fear an epidemic is not far behind, most likely caused by public apathy.

The Philippine National AIDS Council had said the actual number of people with AIDS might have reached 10,000. The council's head, Dr. Rodolph Pebilen, said people with AIDS preferred to remain hidden because the public was not ready to embrace them.

He said this attitude was caused by a combination of misconceptions like thinking that one could catch the HIV virus by sitting close to someone with AIDS or who is HIV positive.

There are three ways HIV can be transmitted:

- Through unprotected sex.
- By blood transfusion or sharing of needles.
- An infected mother can transmit the virus to her unborn child during the last weeks of pregnancy or at childbirth.

Rosales said: "AIDS is real, as real as the sorrow inflicted by it, who suffer mostly in loneliness, stripped of their dignity, hungry and thirsting for compassion, and ostracized in a prison imposed on them by an uncaring society."

Corruption may trigger uprising, gov't warned

By Ed C. Catanaguan Jr.

FILIPINOS MIGHT BE TOLERATING one of the most corrupt business sectors in Asia, but the Political & Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd. (Perc) warns that once they have had enough of bribes and kickbacks, the Arroyo administration may face the danger of a people uprising.

The Hong Kong-based think tank raised that warning in its recent corruption overview of the region where it ranked the Philippines as the country most tolerant of corruption next only to Indonesia.

"History has shown that such patience can end when elites or catastrophes contribute to political instability and there is an opening for change. When that happens—such as in the Philippines at the end of the Marcos regime or in Indonesia at the end of the Suharto regime—populations first find a republican for being extremely tolerant of corruption, can suddenly take to the streets to oust them from power and anger," Perc said.

Former President Ferdinand Marcos was ousted in 1986 by a popular revolt that rode the people's outrage over massive corruption in more than two decades of his administration. His fellow conspirator, former Indonesian President Suharto, was ousted in 1998 after years in Indonesians poor and violent protests against his 32-year rule.

Perc said citizens tend to become more tolerant of corruption because "some elite groups are able to act like they are above the law—and get away with it."

Based on its findings, Perc found no evidence pointing to democracy as "either fixed an authoritarian regime in fighting corruption. Instead, they said that wielding out corruption depended more on the independence and professionalism of institutions like the police and the judicial courts as well as the willingness of political leaders to apply no-fear friends the same laws and standards that they want this set of the citizens to follow.

Perc explained that in many countries in the region like the Philippines, "people who hold political powers are able to so threaten national institutions and have laws are unsupported and enforced that average citizens of the country find protection to fight the problems and consider a (unexpressed) an anonymous but permanent feature of the system."

But unlike Filipinos, Perc noted that when Indonesians were given the chance to express their opinion about corruption (as they did in voting for a change of administration in last year's elections) "it

(Turn to page A-7)

Threat closes . . .

(Continued from A-1)

It also coincided with the announced arrival in the country yesterday of John Negroponte, US director for national intelligence. (See story on this page.)

In a text message to the Inquirer, Quezol said that whenever US last night, "the entire Metro Manila police placed under full alert."

Quezol said all the more intensified "mobile, motorcycle, foot and HNP patrols in embassies, malls, railways" and other public places.

Operations of the Manila Police District were resumed for hours of the embassy conference from closed.

Message from 'Evita'

We were did not find any bombs around the US Embassy after reports of searching the area," Chief Supt. Rolyn Bulalong, MPD director, said in a phone interview.

Bulalong said military personnel had called police headquarters at around 7:30 p.m. on Monday saying a bomb was found.

He said he immediately deployed members of the MPD Explosives and Ordnance Division to check out the area.

ABC-TV-3 News quoted a guard at the embassy as saying a mobile phone text message was received on Monday night from someone named "Evita" threatening to blow up the building.

Hotline

The embassy opened its emergency hotline (524-6000, local 2246 or 2255) for American citizens needing assistance while the embassy is closed.

Lagdameo advised Filipinos whose transactions had been affected to look out for schedules in the media or on the embassy website (http://manila.usembassy.gov).

The embassy was also forced to change the time and venue of a scheduled press conference for visiting US Ambassador John Hilley, a senior Washington adviser on human trafficking, who arrived in Manila Dec. 3.

Instead of meeting reporters in the embassy at 2:45 p.m., Hilley conducted a pre-departure briefing at the Hyatt Regency Intramuros hotel instead at 1 p.m.

'Terrorists'

The alert, Bunye said the commander Hem Pangkat Abnar are the two armed groups in the Philippines on Washington's list of foreign terrorist groups.

On Dec. 1, the US treasury department designated casting this Abnar and Jemaah Islamiyah leader Abdullah Sahirun and leaders Imam Jaafar as terrorists, an act that effectively froze their assets and prohibited any transaction between them and American citizens.

It also announced that the Global Relief and Australia were submitting the names of the three men to the United Nations 1267 Committee to nominate them for inclusion in its list of terror groups associated with the al-Qaeda network and in Jaafar Osama bin Laden. With reports from Jaime A. del Puerto, Marjorie C. Ortiz and AFP

US intel czar in surprise visit to RP

Front page 1

would be here for a couple of days to conduct meetings with his Philippine counterparts on RP-US efforts in counterterrorism.

He said Negroponte would also meet with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Press Secretary Ig Bunye has not confirmed that Negroponte had dinner last night with the President.

Col Ariel Arnaldo, a spokesperson of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, could not immediately confirm whether Negroponte would meet with Gen Generoso Senga, AFP chief of staff, or other military officials.

The US Embassy had earlier issued media advisories regarding Negroponte's visit but set only press briefings for him.

Airport sources said Negroponte and his delegation arrived at 2:45 p.m. on board a US military aircraft from Alice Springs, Australia.

The aircraft parked at the Old Bulaghag Aigrs Aviation Inc. hangar, the ground handler for US Embassy flights.

Flight documents indicated Negroponte as a "VIP." There was a total of 16 passengers and crew on the flight.

Negroponte arrived just as Ambassador John Miller, senior advisor to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, was wrapping up his pre-departure briefing at the Nida Registration Lounge.

Miller left for Beijing via Hong Kong at 4:40 p.m.

Two months ago, an unnamed Fred Kaplan named Negroponte as the Washington official who could best explain the emergence there of alleged US intelligence reports linking the former President to a coup plot against Ms Arroyo.

Leadership could not confirm whether a meeting between Hamas and Negroponte had also been arranged.

Negroponte is the highest American official to visit the country in the middle of a thorny episode in RP-US relations involving the alleged rape of a Filipino woman by a group of US Marines on Nov 1.

The rape complaint is currently under preliminary investigation by the Olongapo City prosecutor's office.

Three weeks ago, the Philippine government asked the US Embassy to surrender custody of the servicemen.

The embassy refused the request in Washington, and has yet to issue a reply.

The London-born Negroponte is a controversial figure.

"His role is now [as] as a symbol of what they consider a dark chapter in American history when the United States closed its eyes to crimes by Third World strongmen because they were seen as partners in a larger anti-communist crusade," said an article published in The Washington Post on March 21.

Negroponte is said to have been involved in the covert funding of the Contras, the armed opponents of Nicaragua's Sandinistas, who ruled that country from 1979 to 1990.

He is also alleged to have covered up human rights abuses in Honduras in the 1980s by operatives trained by the US Central Intelligence Agency.

NEGROPONTE: Unannounced visit raises a lot of serious security questions. AP PHOTO

NO ENTRY ZONE around the US Embassy which also reiterates a travel warning to all US citizens and issues a hotline for all US citizens in the Philippines. AP PHOTO

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Garci told talking to GMA is the main issue

From page A1

looking into the "Hello Garci" scandal.

Santiago's unusually late-night appearance before the House to scrutinize for six hours, beginning at 10 a.m.

However, Cunanan's lawyer, Eddie Tamondong, told lawmakers that Cunanan would not discuss the wiretaps, prompting opposition speculation that his appearance today was meant to muddle the controversy rather than clear it.

Pandacan Rep. Rolex Suplico and Cavite Rep. Gilbert Remulla told Inday would press Cunanan to explain the wiretapped conversations even though his lawyer said he would not talk about them.

"If he will not submit to a sworn oath, then we will ask perhaps for a show cause contempt. Let us see who is lying," Remulla said.

Remulla said that Tamondong's release of the names of eight congressmen who allegedly were talked to Cunanan was meant to divert public attention from the "Hello Garci" tapes and its contents. Cuban, one of those named, denied he called Garci-laran.

"They're trying to divert the issue instead of talking about Cunanan and Garci, they're trying to drag it," Remulla said.

He said the public should not give much credence to Tamondong's media statements and instead wait for Cunanan's testimony.

"A closed book"

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that Mr. Arroyo would be too busy to watch Cunanan's testimony on television. Highlights of Mr. Arroyo's schedule today is attending ceremonies honoring Filipino athletes who won the bronze in the Southeast Asian Games that ended on Monday.

Bunye insisted that the Palace considered "a closed book" allegations that the attorneys provided evidence that the President cheated in the election last year.

"The President is out of the fray and undistracted by the controversy over an election that's passed on the economy, investments and jobs," Bunye said.

He said it was now the turn of some legislators "to face the music of words."

The wiretapping controversy broke out five months ago when Bunye revealed in Palace appearances that he had received CDs purportedly containing wiretapped telephone conversations. He said the recordings were part of an opposition plot to oust the President.

On June 6, Bunye played the recordings to reporters and said that the voice on the tape was the President's but that the voice on the other end of the line was not. He refused to identify the voice.

Bunye, during a subsequent appearance before the House panel, would backtrack on his earlier assertion that Mr. Arroyo's voice was on the wiretap.

The opposition later released its own version of the recordings and declared that their contents were proof Mr. Arroyo rigged the May 2004 presidential election.

Six-hour testimony

The 66-year-old Cunanan disappeared in the midst of the controversy that sparked the worst political crisis of the 4-year-old Arroyo presidency, widespread demands for her resignation and an impeachment attempt in the House.

Cunanan surfaced last week and gave interviews during which he accused a Congressman government report that he had received in the city-state on July 14 en route to a third country. He said he had been in the Philippines all along, meeting and working for nominal expenditures in Mindanao. He also denounced allegations that conspired with Mr. Arroyo to manipulate the balloting.

Cunanan told reporters before flying to Manila on Sunday that he would try to dismantle the "illusion" that he was "guilty" of rigging the electoral process to make Ms. Arroyo's poll victory.

He said he would present a "long list" of members of the House of Representatives and former allies, he said, called him up, or personally met with him in posh hotels across the country, before, during and after the May 10, 2004, elections.

Script for a telenovela?

Bukidnon Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano said he was still hoping "for a miracle"—that Cunanan would tell the truth. "I hope he will come clean," said Cayetano.

"But, commentators, if [Cunanan] is telling the truth or if he is not telling the truth or if he is telling a lie. But we don't expect a huge amount of new information."

Cayetano called on members of the House majority not to resort to technicalities, allowing Cunanan to say nothing initially if he indeed talked to 80 persons and if he really did in Milestones.

"We know that there is a script for a big production and subversion," said Cayetano. "If he wants to blatantly lie, it seems like he's telling the truth, then with us."

Pressures

On Monday, Tamondong said 20 to 30 politicians had called Cunanan during last week's hearings. "Intimidating, stimulating right of them. He said they should serve as "character witnesses" for Cunanan.

Cunanan told the hearing last week he believed the public were "fair-minded people." That he had a "better chance" of convincing the public that he did not rig the 2004 polls.

"That's what I'm going to ask from the public ... If only I can give them the real picture of the situation," said Cunanan, who claimed that several of his politicians had called him while he was in hiding "because they trust that I'm above-board here, I'm the victim here."

He said [opposition] "should not make me their tool" for their "selfish interests."

Destroying opposition

Antipolo Rep. Crispin Beltran said Cunanan's revelations of the names of several congressmen should not deflect the public's attention from "the fact that the most controversial figure he spoke with during last year's elections was Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo herself."

"The issue of whom the Cunanans were here called is during the same period is only secondary to this," he said.

Beltran said it was "obvious that Cunanan wants to destroy the credibility of opposition lawmakers, especially those who are at the forefront of the investigations into the Garci tapes and the campaign to remove the dagit-dagit president from Malacañang."

Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman said the revelations that several opposition lawmakers talked to Cunanan "only highlights the hypocrisy that pervaded all along among opposition personalities in linking President Arroyo with the 'Hello Garci' tapes."

Opposition waging bad karma

In a joint statement, Bayan secretary-general Carlos Isagani Zarate (BMP), Bayan-Muli Bayi and secretary-general Renato Constantino said the "opposition is merely reaping the ill fruits of their bad karma, with their members now on the defensive or in outright denial, and the their initiatives often thus subjected to Palace-scripted media propaganda campaigns."

"Now let's have more updates from them. This is purely political intrigue," the statement said. With reports from Christine O. Avendaño, Jaime A. del Puerto, Christine F. Figueroa, Armand N. Nocum and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., INQ Southern Luzon Bureau

'Hello Garci' tapes, according to Garci

From page A1

as of the other day (your boss) is P50,000." "Kaya nga e. (That is why)," said the female voice, in which he replied, "Wow. (But) if we can promise Garci."

Santiago, summing this we talked, remember that the conversation (on one of which we are trying to answer) was tapped on May 24, 2004. And the subject of conversation was the breaking of the scandal in Hong Kong.

Garci's voice on the tape was the President's but that the voice on the other end of the line was not, a position inconsistent.

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For more stories, see page A2

'Hello Garci' tapes, according to Garci

From page A1

pahalukan daw niya yung ano at saka Tawi-Tawi, e bakasaw sila-ang maiulo doon ... Hindi kaya puwedeng ma-delay yung ano, yung (If he is cheated, he will request the opening (of ballots)... and in Tawi-Tawi, it is said that I might lose there ... We cannot allow a delay of the) senatorial canvassing until after the voting and the rolls tonight? Ibinoto is warning. "Garcillano supposedly answered: 'Kind the rolls? O sige po (all right).'"

Garcillano: In fact it was Barbers who called us up calling our attention to the special election. Kahit na superman ka (Even if you are superman) you cannot get anymore results because the results were already with Congress. I was the one who called up Chairman (Benjamin) Abalos to proclaim Biazon. Biazon should acknowledge that fact.

***

"So Lanao del Sur saka sa Basilan, hindi raw nagma-match yung (In Lanao del Sur and in Basilan, it was said that (the tally) was not matching the) SOV (Statement of Votes) sa COC," said the female voice. Garcillano supposedly replied: "Nagma-match. May posibilidad na hindi magma-match kung hindi nila sinunod yung individual SOV ng mga municipyo. Pero aware ka lang ba kung sa atin po ba o hindi. Kasi dun naman sa Basilan saka Lanao Sur, ilong ginawa nila na yung pagpatuna sa inyo, hindi naman ba kawan, maayos naman ang pagganoo n. (They match. There is a possibility they would not match if they did not follow the individual SOV of the municipality. But I dont know if it is in our favor or not. Because in Basilan and Lanao Sur what they did to increase your ... it is not ... it was done correctly)" Garcillano allegedly said he would ask the election officer in Pangutaran, Sulu, to hide so as not to be compelled to testify on election fraud.

GARCILLANO emerging

Garcillano: (Major Gen. Gabriel) Habacon has nothing to do (with it)," said Garcillano, explaining that one of Habacon's men—without the general's knowledge—asked the election officer to sign the election results of the municipality of Pangutaran (SOV). (I even told the election officer) if these are not the true reports, don't sign it.

***

Garcillano also denied Michael Zuco's accusation that Garcillano was present during a meeting of election officials at the house of President Arroyo in La Vista, Quezon City, a month before the elections.

Garcillano: "Wala ako dun, much less kausama ko si (I was not there, much less was I with) Governor (Jesselino) Dy. I've never been with him ever since. Ano na lang masabihin nila? (What would they say?)"

He said it would be foolhardy for him to be seen by election supervisors at the President's house. Garcillano denied that Zuco is his nephew but confirmed that he had used his name to solicit money from politicians without his consent.

Garcillano insisted that the audio tapes presented by the opposition were "spliced, tampered, edited or corrected."

Garcillano: "Whose conversation was tapped, allegedly it's mine and the president. Who is the victim in this wiretapping? It's me. And then why don't they have to compel me to testify on something which does not exist. Because they have to show us that there was such an original tape, if there is. Hindi ko nga rin masiguro if voice ko po yun o hindi (I cannot be sure if that was my voice or not). I don't know who was that fellow from Bacolod. There are people who can imitate someone else's voice. In fact I issued a statement last election that the most peaceful experienced by this country was the last election. Three days after election, wala na kaming ginagawa na (we were not doing anything any more). and I have been used to handling elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. It will take another month to finish election."

Enchanted evening: Tycoons watch 20 Guyitos unveiled

From page A1

The musicians were also recognized as top advertisers of the business.

With Filipino songs sung by the Philippine Children's Choir from Mandaluyong playing in the background, competition and socialize were set aside as the business leaders talked freely with bureaucrats officers, led by chair Mabini R. Prieto, at the museum lobby.

Joining the business in the celebration were Fernando Zobel de Ayala, Ayala Land Inc. boss Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, Bank of the Philippine Islands, Ed Conde of Globe Telecom; Jesusito Araneta, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. group; Warner Manning of HSBC and Dr. Jorge Bocaro of BMW Philippines.

Off to high note

Completing the list were Honeycomb Land Development, George Ty of Metrobank Foundation, Metrobank president Antonio Abacan, Bro. Ed Philippines CEO Nanda Nandlaskar, Nokia Philippines CEO Sachdeb Bam, Gerry Becerra of Pfizer, Pedrita Elevo of Philip Morris, Catherine Advincula and Dino Francisco of Digital Mobile Philippines, Ramon Jacinto of Canon Marketing, and Dan Tanmoo of the Boutros group.

Only the heads of Samsung and Toyota Motors failed to make it to the event. They were represented by their advertising agencies Mindshare and Dentsu, respectively.

Also at the event were Nagatomo Nagamine, president of Imari Construction, and Enrico Salud, general manager of JVL Philippines.

Acclaimed theatre actor Robert Seña sang the national anthem, starting off the program on a literally high note.

The ties that bind

Incumbent president Alexandra Prieto-Romualdez then came on stage to say a simple "thank you" to the people and organizations that have helped the business reach it to 20 years.

Romualdez described the Inquirer's relationship with its advertisers as a work of art that only increases in value over the years. And that relationship will be nurtured as both the business and corporations reach together toward a better Philippines.

Amid hearty applause, two members of Ballet Philippines danced their way to the left part of the stage and pulled aside the curtains that hid the 20 Guyitos specially commissioned to mark the newspaper's 20 years.

AP IN LIGHTS: The Inquirer has come a long way in the past 20 years. It's up there at the Ayala Museum like a piece of art.

'Power of knowing'

Made of fiberglass, the Guyitos were sculpted by artist Eejid Imao and then painted by the artists Malang, Boi Cabrera, Richie Tabinda, Jack Sobol, Ernesto Pantoja, Totoy Santos, Lydia Velasco, Fernando Sena, Salvador Contreras, Ed Castillo, Bing Sinclit, Boni Olondo, Tes Bautista, Alfredo Delemora, Bin Simmons, Joe Samonte, Romeo Forbes, Ben Dalanghan and Arman Robles.

Each artist was free to interpret Our word's Brains, "The Power of Knowing." The result was as diverse as the opinions, news, features and photos carried by the business in every issue.

Each of the top advertisers got a smaller version of the Guyitos in recognition of their valuable contributions to the business. They also helped honor the 20 schools chosen to receive the life-sized Guyitos, symbols of a newspaper's gratitude to the Filipinos.

The Lucky 20

The honoree partnered with the Quis Boo Foundation in choosing the schools, a process that took about six months.

The 20 high schools that received trophies in the business round of the 26th National Inquirer Bowl this year were picked out of 40,000 schools in 17 regions.

The lucky 20 were Dagupan City National High School, Cagayan National High School, Pateros Memorial High School, Aglaya National High School, Lagunas, Puerto Princesa National High School, Philippine Science High School, Calamba Int, Philippine Science High School, Iloilo City, Ramon Cruz Memorial National High School, Bulacan, Dumaguete City Legal National High School, Regional Science High School, Zamboanga City, Pennoc National High School, Tagaio National High School, Davao, Bukagsan National High School, Regional Caraga Science High School, Puno City National High School, Baguio City, Jamo-Bartolomeo National High School, Manila Science High School, Calamba High School, Cabanatuan, and Philippine Science High School, Quezon City.

Fireworks and wine

Popular singer Barbie Almalbis then took to the stage, singing two numbers, before the Fall Series moved to the plaza of the Ayala Museum for more entertainment led by the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra.

But a few scrambled to take their pictures beside their favorite Guyitos. Many of the Guyitos stood unusual to admire the masterpieces.

Bella set the mood for the entire entertainment as the guests mingled and enjoyed the laughter, the good wine and the finger food passed around by the waiters.

PDI chair Prieto soon got up, went to the stage and offered a toast to the business and the power of knowing.

Loud cheers erupted as the fireworks and laser light display got underway.

Tarra's night

But the loudest cheer from the inquisitive staff came when Bimbo reporter Tarra Quismundo, who cracked her joints for a humanitarian cause, Filipinos gave to become Miss, went up to sing the hymn on 20th anniversary theme.

Pointing a firing end to the cocktails was world-renowned talent Lea Salonga, who was 16 weeks pregnant and came straight from a meeting engagement.

Salonga showed again why she is among the best in the business, singing "I'm My Own" from Lea Wakeskies, her own interpretation of Cyndi Lauper's "True Colors" and "Tomorrow" from the musical "Annie," which launched her career in show business.

A world class act on bringing an end to some elaborated evening.

BUDGET AIRFARE

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Less 20% discount for Senior Citizens

Suggested Retail Price Oct. 9, 2005 – Mekaliligtid ng mga sa 48%

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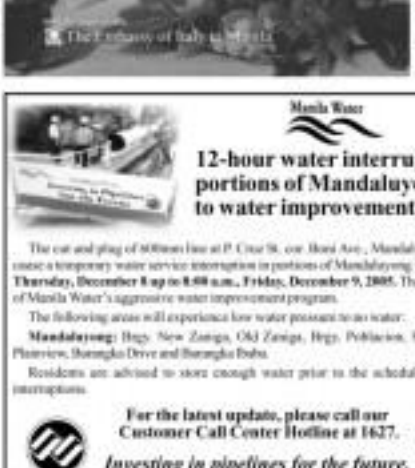
Bio1	10.00	19.00	10 tablets
Bio1	15.00	29.00	20 tablets
Bio1	25.00	49.00	50 tablets
Bio1	50.00	95.00	100 tablets
Anti-bacterial (Pangontra sa Bakterya)			
Bio1	2.00	4.00	1 tablet
Bio1	10.00	20.00	5 tablets
Bio1	20.00	40.00	10 tablets
Bio1	40.00	80.00	20 tablets
Bio1	75.00	150.00	50 tablets
Bio1	150.00	300.00	100 tablets
Bio1	2.00	4.00	1 tablet
Bio1	10.00	20.00	5 tablets
Bio1	20.00	40.00	10 tablets
Bio1	40.00	80.00	20 tablets
Bio1	75.00	150.00	50 tablets
Bio1	150.00	300.00	100 tablets
Anti-cough (Pangontra ubo)			
Bio1	30.00	60.00	10 tablets
Bio1	50.00	100.00	20 tablets
Bio1	100.00	200.00	50 tablets
Anti-diarrhea (Para sa Pagtatae)			
Bio1	1.00	2.00	1 tablet

Quality is gained, so pinoyong mas abot!



Manila Water

12-hour water interruption in portions of Mandaluyong due to water improvement project

The cut and plug of 600mm line at P. Cruz St. cor. Boni Ave., Mandaluyong City will cause a temporary water service interruption in portions of Mandaluyong from **8:00 p.m., Thursday, December 8 up to 8:00 a.m., Friday, December 9, 2005.** The activity is part of Manila Water's aggressive water improvement program.

The following areas will experience low water pressure to no water:

Mandaluyong: Brgy. New Zaniga, Old Zaniga, Brgy. Poblacion, San Jose, Hulo, Plainview, Barangka Drive and Barangka Ibaba.

Residents are advised to store enough water prior to the schedule of the water interruptions.

For the latest update, please call our Customer Call Center Hotline at 1627.

Investing in pipelines for the future.

Giants aim to keep momentum vs Pals

FUERTEMINA COACH RYAN GREGORIO IS UNsure—the hung over must have made his team cautious.

With the Chooks-to-Go Giants on top of the Southern Luzon Division, Gregorio hopes momentum is still on their side after the All-Star break as they resume their campaign in the San Mig Coffee-PBA Piesta Conference tonight.

The Giants had the double-round qualification phase with a 9-win, 3-loss mark, topping that remarkable run with a 78-69 victory over the Alaska boys before the All-Star break.

"I hope we could pick up where we left off," said Gregorio on the eve of their match against the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals. "I'm pleased that the players have managed to maximize their focus. Hope we can keep the momentum."

For Talk 'N Text coach Jeff Limcaoco, the team needs full credit for the fourth they won to get back into the groove.

The Pantheon Chrushers Talk 'N Text rematch is set at 7:20 p.m. following the 4:40 encounter between the Sta. Lucia Realtors and the Aces at the Araneta Center.

In their first meeting last month, the Phone Pals fanned the Giants, 99-82, to take the early lead. But things have changed

STANDINGS	W	L
Purefoods	9	3
Giants	7	4
Talk 'N Text	6	4
Red Bull	5	4
Alaska	5	4
Air21	4	5
Coca-Cola	3	6
Sta. Lucia	3	7
Aces	1	7
San Miguel	1	8

GAMES TODAY
(Araneta Coliseum)
4:40 p.m.—Sta. Lucia vs. Aces
7:20 p.m.—Purefoods vs. Talk 'N Text

Ali Cuzy with Victor Thomas, but the latter was sensational in 6-foot-5 Ali—snapping the impressive 6-foot-3 height rolling.

of late with the Phone Pals losing their last three games.

But Lorie Jun also (unrealized) in drive in the tournament by bringing in Christie Owusu, who helped the Realtors win their only PBA title—the Governors' Cup in 2001.

Owusu, who was announced at 6-4 1/2"-6 yesterday, will be making his debut against his Acoe this afternoon. He replaced Chuse Reaves.

The move followed the Realtors in their encounter 83-75, but will be coming into today's match trailing Evans in the game losing spell and pounding out 40 fellow-import with the departure of Tim McCray.

Asiatic had hoped to replaced

JAMES Pap is again expected to play a leading role in Purefoods' offense.

San Mig back in the groove

ILOILO CITY—SAN MIGUEL HEAD, SLAMMING the ill offense from a four-week break, brought down Red Bull, 85-77, at the University of San Agustin gym here Sunday, setting some the ninth win in the San Mig Coffee-PBA Piesta Conference.

Wesley Johnson had 19 points to lead San Miguel, which posted its first back-to-back wins in the conference. The freshman, however, still failing up the rest with their 3-0 record.

Back was his balance who chose the brightest among coach Jong Uichico's charges. Balance led a big second quarter breakaway and finished the game with 15 points, 10 rebounds, four assists, two steals and one block.

From a tight 23-23 count after the first quarter, Balance and Chris Calaguio combined to put the Beermen safely ahead, 43-28.

San Miguel
(85) Balance 15, Ildu 11, Bihis 11, Cardona 10, Calaguio 9, Seerad 7, Sajid 7, Ferdinand 5, Ulboa 2, Jamel 0.
RED BULL 85—Jose 17, Asistores 15, Flores 12, Valencia 7, Tapale 6, Bajo-Laurel 5, Hubbs 5, Rabe 5, Fortuna 5, Sapida 4, Sajid 0, Lim 0.
Quarters: 23-23; 43-43; 64-64; 85-77.

Dream Game on a dream date

DON'T JUMP UP PREMATURELY AND INSIST Philippine sports can't score big without basketball.

It's sports say, it did.

Look around, if you haven't seen it yet.

No need to long and shout out, for everybody to hear, that sports here could go on outside the basketball court.

The success scored by one athlete in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games—and 4 all sports doing things on their own, although not truly fit for the Filipino physique.

The game of basketball, indeed, still is held blessed. Knocked, pound by the sensational sound of Filipino athletes in the SEA Games.

It was hard to believe basketball could be pushed as the premier game in the land, if just for 30 days.

The shortage of spectators came like a tornado

+++

Ok. There's reason to cheer.

But don't count out basketball for good yet.

Tomorrow, Bobong Velez and friends return to the Coliseum for the Dream Game of 3P caging, in a bid to promptly restore love for basketball here/abroad.

Call it among timing, a case of risk-starting. But two big batches of cage heroes, from Ateneo and La Salle, rival orbands with proud traditions on the hardcourt, date at each other in what's billed as a dream encounter.

As stated in a press release, "La Salle and Ateneo, the country's most celebrated schools, give a new perspective to their storied rivalry when their best players clash in Ateneo La Salle Dream Games '05—The Best of the Best' on Thursday at the Araneta Coliseum, presented by San Miguel Pale Pilsen, Magnol and Nokia."

As engineered by the promoters, past cage greats and present-day stars of both schools honour each side and battle for pride, honor and prestige.

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

Needless to say, the event has the "blessings of a classic encounter with neither ripped, hand we think suspicious motives, enjoying a distinct advantage over the other."

+++

But aren't they worried about the timing of the event? Bobong Velez, the impresario who had over the PBA on its greatest moments at the title, wondered.

Not to worry, Mr. Bobong assured.

They are neither expecting nor wanting to a new boom development in the international sports landscape.

In truth, they are joining the celebration for the overwhelming success scored by

Filipinos the SEA Games.

"This is what the Dream game is all about, a celebration," Mr. Velez said. "Because everybody is elated, happy. It's a mood to celebrate and indulge."

So how are ticket sales coming along?

"It was hard to believe at first, but we are almost sold out. The mood is positive, we are assuming the Dream atmosphere created with that wonderful SEA Games performance."

Who said this should be a perfect time to cage a rivalry between La Salle and Ateneo, in a festive atmosphere involving fans, the pep squads, and even alumni of both schools.

+++

The spectators involving alumni will start their salad days, will be at 4 p.m., legends versus the greats.

"The cards involve current standouts from the '80s, '90s and '00s," Velez hinted.

To name a few: Lim Eric Bong, Gabby Velasco, Alex Marquez, Alex Sison, Jong Uichico for La Salle; Jimmy and Jojo Alabanza, Tim Pumilia, Otis Alcoba, Rudy Tolosa, Eric Reyes, Noriel Christopher, Ogie Narvasa for Ateneo.

The format will fit players from the '80s in the first quarter, alumni from the '90s in the second quarter, players from the '00s in the third, before an open fielding of players of whatever vintage. Monday, carry-defer and blood pressures in the final quarter.

The main event will be a mix and clash of eight PBA players and four UAAP standouts from each side.

A classic encounter is inevitable, as said Bobong Velez.

So far La Salle had prevailed in the last three Dream Games.

"This is the 20th year of this affair, but Ateneo, the Ball Mary team, would finally spring a retrieve," Bobong said.

Why?

"Remember Eric, it is the feast of the Immaculate Conception."

It's a holiday of obligation.

The WORLD

Edna Lemarie B. Guzon

After 9/11, US still unprepared vs terror

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED STATES REMAINS "dangerously" unprepared against potential terrorist assaults on its home soil more than four years after the Sept. 11 attacks, members of a former commission investigating the attacks said Monday.

The government has been dismissive fighting terrorism abroad to the point that the country is "not as safe as we ought to be," said Thomas Kean, the president of the nine-Democrat/9/11 Commission.

"Some of the failures are shocking. Four years after 9/11, it is a scandal that police and firefighters in large cities still can't talk to each other when they are hit with a major crisis," Kean said.

"It's scandalous that airline passengers are still not screened against all names on a terrorist watch list. It is scandalous that we still allocate scarce homeland security dollars on the basis of pork barrel spending and not on risk," he said.

Kean was speaking at the release Monday of a report assessing the government's follow-up on the recommendations made by the commission, which published a 500-page report in July 2004 on the circumstances surrounding the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. The newest report was severely critical of the administration of President George W. Bush for paying too little attention to domestic security needs.

"The leadership has been disrupted in this country," said Kean, the former governor of New Jersey.

"The United States are safer, but we're not as safe as we ought to be." The report was also tough on Congress for making domestic security spending dealers based care on pork barrel and on political favoritism. A leader of the opposition Democrats wanted little time in dissecting the government for security deficiencies.

"The report shows that while the administration and Congress are focused on fighting an offensive war in Iraq, they are dangerously neglecting the defensive war on terror we should be fighting here at home," said Senator Charles Schumer. Another former member of the 9/11 Commission, Richard Ben-Veniste, spoke of the risk the free-hand given to the US military poses to individual liberties.

"America must be prepared to defend its values and its liberties as well as its homeland," he said.

The co-commissioners assessed the government's response to 41 recommendations they made in the original 2004 report. Of 39 points it gave the government a failing grade, delivering an especially harsh judgement on the government's treatment of detained suspected terrorists.

"All treatment of detainees has eluded broad criticism, and makes it harder to build the necessary alliances to cooperate effectively with partners in a global war on terror," they said. AFP

THIS artist impression shows a possible new species of mammal, called Bird Borneon (Inset).

New animal found in Borneo jungles

JAKARTA—RESEARCHERS FROM THE WWF conservation group may have made the extremely rare discovery of a new species of mammal in the dense forests of central Borneo, the organization said Tuesday.

The carnivorous mammal, slightly larger than a domestic cat with dark red fur and a long bushy tail, was photographed twice by an automated camera at night in 2003 on the Indonesian side of the island, the WWF said.

Neither Western nor Dayak experts are locally well acquainted with the area recognized the animal, the group said.

The animal, which has very small ears and large hind legs, was spotted in the Bukit Menuraung national park in the mountainous jungles of Kalimantan, where vast tracts of rainforest still remain. "Most were convinced it was a new species of carnivore," WWF said, adding that researchers were hoping to set traps to catch a live specimen.

WWF zoologist Stephan Wulffraat told AFP that a live capture of the animal was required to confirm it was a new species.

The animal appeared to be a cross "between a cat and a fox" and may live in trees during the day, coming down at night, he said.

The group said it was extremely rare these days to discover a new mammal species of this size, particularly so far inland.

If confirmed, it would be the first time in more than a century that a new carnivore has been discovered on the island, which lies between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

WWF warned that plans to create the world's largest palm oil plantation in Kalimantan, along the border with Malaysia's Sarawak and Sabah states, threaten further new discoveries. The scheme, funded by the China Development Bank, is expected to cover an area of 1.8 million hectares.

Environmental watchdogs have criticized the plan, arguing that the jungle soil in the area was unfertile and that the operation was unsuitable for palm oil. AFP

US urges China: Set timetable for HK democracy

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED STATES urged China Monday to quickly set up a timetable for full democracy in Hong Kong, where people staged mass protests at the weekend demanding the right to choose their leaders.

"We believe that it's important to achieve universal suffrage in Hong Kong as soon as possible, that the people of Hong Kong are ready for democracy, and that the sooner that a timetable for achieving universal suffrage is established, the better," deputy State Department spokesperson Adam Ereli said.

"And it's certainly, I think, the spirit in which the demonstrations took place," he said, referring to mass street protests in Hong Kong on Sunday demanding full democracy that was promised when Britain handed its former colony back to China eight years ago.

Protest organizers said some 250,000 people took part in the protests, while the police put the figure at 63,000.

Pro-democracy leaders have also demanded an audience with Chinese chiefs to press their case and called on supporters to join them to yet another demonstration next day weekend.

China is reluctant to stoke any turmoil over Hong Kong, fearing reform in the territory might weaken its economy and spark calls for democratic change within China. AFP

Thaksin drops $50-M libel claim vs media mogul

BANGKOK—Thai PM Thaksin Shinawatra will have to the verdict of the country's second monarch and drop libel claims of $50 million against a media mogul, his chief lawyer said on Tuesday.

"The Prime Minister wants to forgive all parties involved for the sake of the national reconciliation," lawyer Thana Boonyaratkalin told Reuters after King Bhumibol Adulyadej called on Thaksin to foster to restore national unity.

Thaksin had filed a half dozen criminal and civil lawsuits against Sondhi Limthongkul, a media mogul who has attracted thousands to weekly rallies at which he has denounced Thaksin as a corrupt, power-hungry autocrat.

Thai newspaper editors accuse the government of using costly defamation cases to gag them and they vowed last week to set up a fund to fight the suits and campaign for reform of libel laws.

"Our legal team has met him and he has agreed to withdraw all the cases," Thana said of Thaksin, whom the king extolled greatly during his televised birthday speech to the nation at the weekend for his overseas activity to criticism.

The king told Thaksin that Thais preferred to watch soap operas rather than the prime minister rushing on to their television screens to respond to every criticism, alluding to those from media tycoon Sondhi Limthongkul.

Sondhi has taken his severely current attacks that stem to a

THAKSIN

Bangkok park since it was taken off state-run television in September and has been drawing large crowds in his battles Thaksin for alleged abuse

SONDHI

of royal powers.

Sondhi's lawyer, Suwat Apaipak, told a Bangkok radio station the lawsuit welcomed the withdrawal of the libel cases and would go ahead with their verdict's push only on Friday.

Political tensions over high-ranking senior military officers attempted to intimidate Sondhi, warning him to stop mentioning King Bhumibol Adulyadej in his war of words with Thaksin which had aroused Thaksin of attempting to usurp the king's privileges.

Buying his 78th birthday speech on Monday, the king to directly advised Thaksin not to overreact to criticism and listen too much to the advice of lawyers.

"My legal team has met with Prime Minister Thaksin this morning and the prime minister is forgiving everyone to do that to create conciliation by withdrawing all the lawsuits against Sondhi," Thana told reporters.

"I will go to court and withdraw the suits this afternoon," Thana said.

Government spokesperson Jurapong Tuchinda said that Thaksin was heeding the king's advice.

"The government will fully listen to the king's advice, and from now on this government will accept both praise and criticism from the public and opposition," Jurapong said.

Thaksin has garnered a reputation for intolerance of criticism and has attempted to muzzle Thailand's most influential press through law suits, closure of radio and television programs and other forms of pressure. Reuters, AP

Ethical concerns grow on partial face transplant

AMERICAN SCIENTISTS ARE EXPRESSING mounting concerns that the world's first partial face transplant, performed in northern France on Nov. 27, may have been unethical—or without adequate medical and ethical preparation.

Some scientists say they fear that if the French effort fails, it could not only destroy the life of the transplant recipient, a 38-year-old French woman whose face was mauled by a family dog, but jeopardize years of careful planning for a more basic kind of transplant surgery.

"We've been working on this effort and the science for some time, going slowly while we figure out immunology and address ethical and medical issues," said Dr. L. Scott Levin, chief of plastic and reconstructive surgery at Duke University Medical Center. "This flies in the face of everything we've tried to do."

The scientists' worries stem in part from the execution of the surgery and in part from news reports that called into question the patient's emotional state.

Dr. Maria Siemionow, director of plastic surgery research at the Cleveland Clinic, who has been preparing to perform a full face transplant, said the way the transplant was conducted appeared to conflate two experimental protocols: the transplantation of facial tissue and the infusion of stem cells from the donor's bone marrow into the patient in an attempt to prevent rejection of the new face.

The first procedure, although untried until now, has been well studied, and the microsurgical techniques involved are commonplace. But the second has been successful in human subjects only rarely and only recently. The French team's decision to perform both novel procedures simultaneously means that it may be difficult to determine the cause of success or failure of the transplant, Siemionow said. "Ethically," she said, "it will make it difficult to get clean answers—if it works, why does it work, and if it goes wrong, was it the transplant or the stem cells?" New York Times

WorldBriefs

Mall blast kills 5 Israelis

NETANYA, Israel—Five Israelis were killed and 30 were wounded on Monday when a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up at the entrance to a shopping mall in the northern coastal town of Netanya. The attack at the Israeli seaside, the largest of a similar bombing into that country ago, was initially condemned by Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the United States. Responsibility was claimed by Islamic Jihad, the group behind at least the bombings, and the armed Islamic exploded a device in March. Police said the bomber was carrying several kilograms of explosives in a bag but was prevented from entering the mall by a policeman and injured at around 17:20 (11:20 GMT). AFP

Strong quake hits Africa

GOMA, Congo—A powerful earthquake struck east and central Africa on Monday, killing at least one person and injuring several. Close to the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), near the epicenter on the border with Tanzania. A UN official in Kinshasa said a medical source in the town of Kalemie, some 60 km from the epicenter, said an infant had died from injuries sustained when the quake caused the collapse of his family's house. Kalemie was seemingly worst hit by the quake, but registered 7.3 in other Richter scale and struck at least six nations throughout the region, in addition to the DRC and Kenya. It was felt in the west Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, according to residents. AFP

Vanuatu volcano may erupt

PORT VILA, Vanuatu—Authorities in Vanuatu are evacuating thousands of villagers from homes near a volcano spewing ash and clouds on the island of Ambae amid fears of a major eruption, officials said Tuesday. Mount Manaro began moving ash and a plume of steam on Nov. 27 and local volcanologist Douglas Chu he said Tuesday that conditions "is unpredictable and dangerous at the site 10 to 15 minutes before a lahar." Lahar are mixtures of rock debris and water that flow down the slopes of volcanoes. Chu said he had been from Ambae. AP

ISSN 0116-2042 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER VOL. XXVI, NO. 352

OPINION

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Choosing the chief

WHEN CHIEF JUSTICE HILARIO DAVIDE JR. RETIRES in two weeks' time, he leaves the Supreme Court a demonstrably changed institution. In part that is because of the accident of history. The country's first impeachment trial, the second people-powered transfer of political power, his own landmark impeachment case. He did not will or want any of these, but they came his way and changed the Court it-

EDITORIAL self.

But in part he leaves the Court vastly different from when he entered it because of the imprint of character. A man of intellect and integrity, he showed a reformist bent that many mistook for mere judicial activism.

He was, in a word, the right man at the right time.

His replacement will have decidedly large shoes to fill. Who should it be? The Judicial and Bar Council has nominated three veteran associate justices of the Supreme Court. All President Macapagal-Arroyo has to do is choose from among Justices Reynato Puno, Artemio Panganiban and Leonardo Quisumbing.

She has her work cut out for her. The first thing she should do is to put the so-called tradition of seniority ad-here-it belongs in the dustbin of history.

Consider: If seniority were the only criterion for appointment to the office of chief justice, why even bother to reverse convention through the Judicial and Bar Council? In the world of seniority-only selections, a JBC would in fact be superfluous, reduced merely to endorsing the most senior candidates.

If seniority were the main, though not the only, criterion, why even bother to open the nomination process to non-members of the Supreme Court? By law and by practice, the JBC can consider the nominations of lawyers who have not served in the Supreme Court. This opportunity for outsiders, so to speak, is not an oversight, but an embrace of the truths of institution-building. New blood keeps old institutions fresh.

If seniority were only one of several criteria for choosing the short list of nominees for the next chief justice, why even bother to include it in the first place? Broadly understood, seniority refers to length of service in the judiciary. As "abogado de campanilla," or an esteemed professor of law, with excellent qualifications to become chief justice, still by definition fail the nomination process, simply because of a lack of service in the judiciary.

(The same arguments, with the necessary changes, apply as well against the seniority tradition that seems to obtain in military appointments.)

Seniority, in sum, does not serve the deepest interests of any institution. Preparation for office does.

In the case, the two are often mistaken for one another. There is no reason why the President should make that mistake, too.

The hundred-year history of the Court itself proves that seniority is not the same as preparation for office. Of the country's first 20 chief justices, half were not the most senior of the candidates. In the even longer history of the United States Supreme Court, where traditions inform our own, seniority is not even a consideration. The newly appointed chief justice, John Roberts, was still in law school when some of the present justices were first named to the US Supreme Court. Some of the best chief justices, in fact, were complete outsiders: Earl Warren was a governor of California, Charles Evans Hughes was a candidate for President.

If not seniority, then, what should be the criteria for choosing the next chief justice?

Impeccable integrity, against which cheap insinuation or expert political maneuvering will always fail.

Reforming zeal. For many the judiciary, precisely because it is the non-political branch of government, is truly the citizen's last resort. But reforms need to continue, or even lawyers must be sanctioned, corrupt judges ousted, dockets drastically reduced. To show, Davide's replacement must continue Davide's reform of the judiciary.

Management skills and shrewd prescience. Given the number of cases that clog the judiciary's dockets, the new chief justice must, like the great Hughes, turn the courts into veritable centers of productivity.

Above all, a non-partisan nature and reputation. We need a chief justice who is apolitical in the best sense: someone who is not only above the political fray, but perceived by the public to be eminently so.

League of Barangays against Cha-cha

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

DO YOU KNOW THAT FULLY ONE-THIRD of the national budget goes to the payment of interest on our foreign loans? Only for the interest, and not for the payment of the principal. So our debt does not diminish but goes bigger every year as we borrow more and more since we cannot pay for example, after paying for 20 years for the loan used to construct the multibillion nuclear power plant in Bataan, which we will not operate, the debt remains the same. The amount has not gone down by even one peso.

Even with more taxes, cuts in the DPWH and the army, no money to set aside to pay part of the principal of our loans. The additional revenue is already spent before it is earned because of debts spending.

All these were revealed by Sen. Manuel Villar, chair of the Senate appropriations committee, at the Sagittarius Mountain Brotherly Villar and the six votes and DBM were originally intended to pay part of the principal of the foreign debt, "but it does not look like that will happen."

Legally, Congress cannot appropriate funds that are not in existence. The other choice are funds to cover the appropriations. But this requisitions is routinely violated year in and year out. The ways and means committee makes the revenue estimates based only on expected revenue, which is always optimistic. Expected income from tax measures that have been filed, or are still being planned to be filed, are already included in the estimates. If the tax bill is not passed, then there is no income, but the appropriations made on the basis of the expected revenue are already incorporated. (Technically, Congress has enacted the law.) This is why there are many laws that are not being implemented, they account the provisions "failure to availability of funds."

Villar also revealed that the budget cannot be passed before the end of the year because the House of Representatives has not yet sent it to the Senate. The budget is usually received by the Senate in October or November. Villar said, "It's a train with a late departure and late arrivals and we haven't got it yet. The

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

House is busy because trying to get the Cha-cha going." At this rate, he added, the budget cannot be passed until next March.

"It is probable that the administration wants the old budget to be reenacted again?" nominally indeed. If the old budget is reenacted, the appropriations for finished projects, such as roads and other infrastructure, would still be there and the President can spend it for other purposes.

"Yes," replied Villar, "but then it would not have any increase in the budget."

On the House resolution calling for a constituent assembly to write a new Constitution, Villar said it has not yet been sent to the Senate. He said he does not know if he has six votes in the Senate. It would only be achieved "

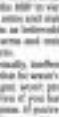
There shows the 'people's initiative' which is said to be the last resort of Speaker Jose de Venecia to amend the Constitution?"

While the Constitution provides for a "people's initiative" by gathering enough signatures, Villar said, there is no enabling law for it. And in 1997, the Supreme Court struck down such a plan by the Pro-Cha campaign, in a decision that prohibited the Commission on Elections from disseminating a "people's initiative" to amend the Constitution without an enabling law.

Besides," said the other panelist, James Monty Lim, national president of the Liga ng mga Barangay, "the majority of the barangay captains all over the Philippines, "the people do not want Charter change or a parliamentary government." Lim said they have been consulting their constituents and their consensus is overwhelmingly against changing the Constitution and form of government. What they

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

Very wrong tack



THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I WAS STARTLED—JUST SUNDAY TO BEING MORE PRECISE—LAST SUNDAY TO READ IN an item on page 2 of our newspaper that said the Cebu journalists meant to visit themselves in preparation for that, they were planning on having training programs in our Provincia now (me). Shocked by the killing last Thursday of three Cebu radio men, radio veteran George Librojan, who was gunned down in his store in a city market, the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas Cebu figured journalism ought to be safer to prevent themselves.

Well, that's for it meant to be alarmed. Librojan is the 14th journalist killed in the Arroyo years. He is the 36th since GMA took over the reins of government in 2001, making her now the second only to the most murderous by journalists in this country. And the way we're handling the killings, our own announcements (like dreaming up new regard it as par for the course, or part of journalism's intrinsic, then can be no more, replacement.

I must say here before I go on that while I am thankful for the attention to the cases of the killings has taken place, I do appreciate the concerns of my brothers and sisters in the profession who live elsewhere, and who have been the objects of that attacks. To say I know how they feel is presumptuous. To say I know how they feel, you can only empathize with them to the extent that you share a common lot as human beings. In this case, I have the added advantage of sharing a common lot as journalists. Never mind that the community as said and increase our collective vulnerability. Yes, even those of us in the presumably "safe" capital.

I hasten said that. I mean who say that I find the idea of moving ourselves as a response to the problem totally benighted. At the very least, that is to lessen it does not solve the problem, but compounds it. You allow journalists to go around with guns, their become the problem. Journalists can be abusive, too, and in a country where there are many fly-by-night journalists as there are fly-by-day

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

Losers no more

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 40 YEARS, THE PHILIPPINES won the gold medal championship of the Southeast Asian Games, garnering a total of 261 medals, 113 of them gold, 84 silver and 64 bronze.

Previous golds, long dispersed in past middle-distance sparkling and gradual and a podium moments, soared in the days since Philippine flags topped the most number of gold medals, disproportionating their supremacy in these 100 events since the 12 Southeast Asian countries participated.

The Philippines' gold haul surpassed the next superior Singapore's output of 51 (32-8) in the 1981 Games, which it shouldered.

In the 2005 Games, Team Philippines was participated in 22 sports and 36 events. The 2005 Games has the highest athletic strength ever assigned to sportsmen raised by Sen. Pimm Mercury Thomas Bautista-Lim, about the features of the 40th outing. Thomas guaranteed the results to some events in which Filipinos competed in the past, but the past meaning had piled up by the resurgent Filipinos from the east of the Games. His remarks presented an outburst of angry nationalistic blasts from some members of Congress, as well as a display of the nation's sense of humor.

The Games victory was so important for the restoration of nationalistic ebullient we threatened a repeat of diplomatic tribulations with a long-term neighbor. Thomas said that the victory was the first in 40 years with Malaysia coming out last with all our conclusions.

Thomas's unsparing sentiments did not stop the Filipino team from considering their total, which was 261 medals, 113 of gold, 84 silver and 64 bronze. The 2005 Philippine medal harvest not only surpassed the last such performance but also surpassed the last such performance by Thailand in 1985 when it had won the greatest haul totaling 111 items.

The championship in the 2005 Games is especially noteworthy because it broke the hitherto near-monopoly of powerful Thailand in the Southeast Asian games, or perhaps most of the Philippines are only in regional sports (in which a land developed since its fruitless record in the pre-war Far Eastern Olympics in competition with China and Japan and in earlier record in the 1930s Olympics in basketball, swimming and some track and field events) but also in this last we recommend developments. It is the only sports that we are best known.

Since the 1970s, the Philippines and Thailand (whose populations are nearly of the same size) have competed tack-and-neck in terms of economic growth and development. In the 1997 Asian financial crisis, Thailand's economy was more downward than the Philippines, but Thailand's economy has since recovered more than ours.

Athletic prowess is economically significant as a demonstration of national pride and of national capacity to get things done. This is why statesmen seek outstanding records in the Olympic Games event as a way to show their political prowess and programs—something that cannot be said of the Philippines.

The country's rare success in the 2005 Games came despite limited funding, and seeds for it should provide unbridled optimism that the Philippines' endowment can support far more than this is a government-limited national athletic development program.

Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose Cojuangco is reasonably confident that coming Philippine performance in "lower preparation" and to better opportunities, not plagued by party squabbling. These were barely combing this time and forget about the Games' financial support for the preparations. Local governments helped by providing venues for some of the events since many metropolitan venues are nearly inadequate. The decentralization of the athletic venues underscores the Philippines' lack of athletic venues, unlike cities in Bacolod, Manila and Tagaytay, which made up for the shortfalls in Manila—toward the Games. Local authorities used their cost increases to build the stadiums, pretty cluttered by many cities, or the national development authorities and by pork-laced funds.

We can't share President Macapagal-Arroyo's triumphant declaration that "We are on the road to economic recovery and we are on the road to the Filipino fighting spirit and solidarity." She had nothing to do with our success in the 2005 Games. It seemed despite the outward poverty-stricken figure we are athletic development.

The victory represents a people's personality drive and optimism on a majesty for which of credit should go to individual athletes who suffered rot in the face of tremendous handicaps.

The Philippines' success in the 2005 Games is due to Asia's no-ultimate talents, which bathed individuality in its glow. The Games showed that as a section of the nation from the squalid sunbeam to the of the Gulf Stars tape wrinkle.

For the first time in recent years, the Filipino's sporting ethic, the nation's attention will shift to the close-knit and envious, with the congressional committee hearing what to address first to set about with the Jose Rizal. President Arroyo's speech was not so much of a speech as a rallying cry for national unity. Its executive guarantees that we will be on the road to realizing the current political crisis.

The Games proved that we are under things happen and are not permanent losers, even if we are left to fend for ourselves. Our people can to more our best achievements without requiring aid from the government. Our problem is the fantastic and the illness who are determined to choose for nothing can work in this country. It has taken the athletes to show that, with pit and hard work, we can be a leader in one endeavor. And there's when everyone Philippines wellness are showing with their excitement are also.

Balance and humanity

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

AS THE TERMINOT CENTENNIAL FILM AWARDS were being handed out last Nov. 23 at the Shangri-La Complex, I was on opposite ends of the hotel in Singapore and Manila.

But those parties at the awards ceremony are the components of the six nominees' acceptance speeches they deserved adequate audience. I agree, for as I watch the comedy of those extraordinary women in film, I couldn't help but regret our absence that night.

Anyway, here are excerpts from the acceptance of two members, Marilou Diaz Abaya, awardee for directing, and Chito Rono Gozon, awardee for producing. The same the reasons of the other awardees or subsequent decisions.

* * *

FROM MARILOU Diaz Abaya, who apologized for her hoarse voice as she had some direct laryngitis and was under medication:

"I am feeling very honored and also very special this evening because in a few weeks, I will be celebrating my 60th year as a film director. Friends in various cities in the Philippines and abroad have been asking me what I would like for my greatest reward and I could never find the perfect words any more than I could to endure—to shine. I shall be forever grateful. I still work with a passion that I had when I started out. I am writing a life inside me and telling a story outside me has become inevitable for me as a person and as a storied participant. I guess it was the basis of my first dialogue as the children of Rizal in my first film, 'Karnal Bakal.'

"I've come a long way from my first 16 mm angry films in the '80s and '90s and just when I thought it got hard, I found myself in the world of digital. I have to say that I am very honored that our feeling wasn't just about all an act of entertainment but especially to the war zones, into feeling would actually be an act of healing, of peacemaking, of conflict resolution. I think the challenge today, particularly, is more whether the number of Filipino movies is alarmingly decreasing but at the same time as many other technologies are accessible, to both audiences and artists alike. The challenge for women is to fill the void who makes action films but already disappeared. We don't really know what the new things—aspects, to reach of completion, in the middle of a struggle—has always empowered, always decisive, and, yes, then theirs have always been to make their own choices.

"The winners of my other ECP films, among them 'Himala' and 'Tinu Pinas Blue,' were wondering also women from positions of their time and place, but eventually transcended their boundaries.

"As I produced more films, the time under four Cinema 1 Awards, I realized that my perspective of values are the simplest through which this one by world.

"For example, Vilma, the OFW mother in 'Anak,' endured years of separation in an Israeli to the point where she was ready to die, she upheld her sense of duty towards and love.

"As in the film of 'Imaging has' may be a basic character. But the sequel one to her concerns. We realized that she was the mother of a woman, this time raised with laughter.

"My personal favorite is Vilma's last Binibining of 'Bata Pare Paano Ito Gumaan.' Yes, the sun entrapped's forward and often, she was always with the people around her to define her. Only she defined herself.

"Being a film producer is a wonderful calling, because it gives me a ride a ringside seat of the characters of my films, and since he has to say here.

"In many difficult times, I can't hold or comment my sense of duty, but inside and love. I can, had as quite are struggles with laughter. But in my role I served in life, I would like to think that only I defined myself.

"Now at 16, I am in the same age of my husband when he talked to me about my previous film three. Now, I find it to be a challenge to be now be a real feminist, but to would be somewhere or a writer or videophile.

"I am happy that I have come full circle. Now I have come to a completion as a person, regardless of me.

"In the end, the example of feminism is when a woman is able to an agenda. Time will come when gender does not matter anymore; only our humanity will matter. I will accept that. I will, finish my responsibility. Except acknowledging for so saying."

Human beings in history

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

QUEZON CONFESSED AFTERWARDS (ONCE AGAIN!) ME why I liked teaching so much, why time hasn't spent doing research or writing more books and women) in a classroom with a loyal audience. At the time, writing 200 much for beyond my classroom—but I did not get the chance to say it. Quezon laughed—or a yeow—that made me know I'd have nothing more. With the lessons, this column is read further than the stack of our paper without and I am not sure if I am writing to myself.

Writing is like teaching. Most people who have heard my lectures often comment that I speak as I write. Last week, I received letters from De la Salle University Philippine Studies students Thomas Lim Bautista and Jose Victor Torres Javellana, respectively, who said that they enjoyed my style. Based on the comments of Spain I receive daily, these letters were generally positive in tone. But the students were good readers in class, particularly when they were writing the Nov. Still it is interesting to know when young people have to say about history.

"Imagine my horror when I realized that a college professor can be so boring," wrote Lim, who was late by a blue-blooded Ateneo. My story has to Ate thinking. You would actually learn history on the spot, which sounds ironic and good this. My lessons on you if you haven't figured out which format I've been using for my columns. Each column is like an episode in a TV series that tells a story of interesting to us the world like it's a bloody Pinkies. I'm a facilitator. Spell it backwards, and you get "quit-here."

Javellana's letter was more detailed. "Spell it like you usually do and you get when sounds like a German actor salvation Anyway, opening and smile, I just wanted to thank you for your very agreeable comments you made for Jose's name Revolucion 25 column in the footnote. The one about Rafael's cause.

"First off, I always hated history. The subject, I mean, since history history itself would be jewels which reminders and a source of my own mind

Monks and neuroscientists

THE DALAI LAMA DELIVERING AN OPENING SPEECH AT the neuroscience conference of neuroscientists.

That was exactly what he did last month in Washington, at the annual conference of the Society for Neuroscience, and it was not without controversy. Even before the conference could start, some 800 scientists signed letters threatening a boycott if the invitation to the Dalai Lama was not withdrawn. Their reason? The religious leader was not qualified to talk.

PINOY KASI

Michael C. Tan

The "one Dalai Lama" statement proves latent lead to pass. Arguing a Dalai Lama to focus on neuroscience at conference is of pure scientific zeal, because it will highlight the problem of religion's role (Santa, limited research and compromised scientific rigour." Also, comments one commenter, he was not minded, too, harboring the same kind of disposition that we deny dogmas in religious theories.

The Dalai Lama's appearance stood close ground and in the end, some 14,000 people attended the opening ceremonies, where the Dalai Lama talked on various issues and responsibilities in research, rather than neuroscience. Nevertheless, the protests from many have unobtrusively generated more publicity for the Tibetan religious leader, including his support for scientific research and neuroscience.

Brain fair

The historical relevance of meditation have been well-documented, with chronicles regard of Islam at one fighting the Islam in fighting the, but conscience used to scuff of them findings to further "Buddhism" (the Buddhist's teachings and techniques and heart-how" will not be ruined." More recent research shows that the effects may be found on one's real changes going on in the brain's structure and physiology.

On one hand, the neurologized studies tell us the brain is much more vulnerable than we first thought. From the local magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and electroencephalography by all kinds of external stimuli, from bad diets affecting the parts of the brain dealing with memory, to a break-up with a lover affecting the brain regions that control physical pain . . . in yes, beta brain can indeed be painful to most things and people.

On the positive side, there is much research to suggest how you can reverse some of the problems brought about by brain trauma and wounds—changing diets, for example, and exercising, as well as meditation.

Meditation comes through in the research as a way of restoring the brain. Just recently, the handling of three cerebral work-out resident issues in students' work new discoveries about the interaction of brain structure and function. I'm personally amazed, but not surprised, with studies linking language and music acquisition. Here's a study again for home: my husband's brain responded to music in a way that surprised me (admittedly could easily found that kids who started Portuguese had lower musical exam, which is not surprising since Chinese languages are tonal, just like music. Another study released at the Washington conference by Sandra Trehub, found clear cases of training improve language learning. Where the brain responds to music is used to some and plays a crucial instrument "exercises" parts of the brain that distinguish specific changing sounds.

Scientists used to think that the brain is immovable, fixed at birth. Now we're realizing you can bring about changes in the brain's structure and function, not only through acute lessons, but using a new language, or meditation. One of the papers presented at the Washington conference from the Massachusetts General Hospital's Psychiatric Neuroimaging Research Program described changes in cortical brain regions among experienced meditators who practiced a form of Buddhist meditation for higher thought and planning, as well as the results on the right region, which interprets emotions, through and senses. In non-meditators, the senses usually decline with age.

Beyond physiology

The Massachusetts research is encouraging because it didn't look at Buddhist monks with many years of experience, instead it studied meditation practitioners in the 20s who had taken only 20 to 40 minutes a day, often without the trappings of Buddhist religious practice. Meditation is a way of, as I wrote, "reclaiming" people, who have families and work to address, cut away the luxuries of different types of meditation.

Another paper presented at the conference showed how meditation can be more effective than a nap to improve attention and the performance of tasks in adults. Whether one's stakeholders, it seems, can be paradoxically soothing. Last year, there was a spate of articles around the very modernist stress at work on the workplace, a without this research in the brain that affects our brain and memory. Mistakes do, I should say, that have meditation may actually be a matter of taking the time here.

Ironically, the dogmatic monsters's hypersensitive acceptance monks monthly to generate have about religious training with science, for example, that brain's waste scientist with these the research around meditation.

I doubt the Dalai Lama invented meditation in fact suggests that it works independently of one's religious beliefs. The attention improves can be elicited not just by meditation but by repeated actions, from studying and drawing to lingering prayers and beads, whether these are Catholic, Buddhist or Muslim. Meditating monks certainly have an edge in this game: and it's not just because they take Prozac or take Ritalin, educational all the time but because of the stress and agitation.

My guess is that we can tie the brain's responses to that and calming feelings, but how to it that ideas give notes. Research is just beginning to understand the impact on our personal beliefs, but whether our religion being better than the other.

The Dalai Lama, in fact, offered some intriguing food for thought at the Washington conference, as he talked to neuroscientists. "Scientific knowledge fundamental reduce painful," he said, "but the knowledge of religious practice is more effective in inner transformation." Further, I am speaking of what I call "secular ethics" that embrace the core moral principles, such as compassion, tolerance, a sense of caring, consideration of others, and the responsible use of knowledge and power—points, also that are important for those who do not follow any religious and nonbelievers, and followers of that religion or that religion."

The hero-one the Dalai Lama seems strange given the immense problems we face today as right wing the in the Indonesian tsunami that killed more than 100,000 people and the teaching of Darwinian evolution because this to "science," to block our education in schools because that supposedly hinders courage progress in and direction. In the end, it a threat to called scientists' fear of imaginations and lack of trust in people that hamper the unbending of the human mind's full potentials.

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AMADEO DOROLA

LETTERS

Throwing the baby with the bathwater

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Clark white elephant revived

By Tarsem Dreja
Clark Special Economic Zone

THE EXPO PILIPINO, THE 60-hectare park that tried to showcase the achievements of Filipinos in their fair 100 years as a nation, is being primed for re-opening after six years of illness and a string of scandals.

The Arroyo administration is hoping to give the Expo Pilipino—now called the "Clark Expo"—an auspicious start, planning Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, for its official launch.

The administration also agreed to make the Expo's 35,000-seat Freedom Ring amphitheater the venue for the final edition of reality TV blockbuster "Pinoy Big Brother" on Dec. 10.

"Ang Expo ay para sa atin, para sa lapot (The Expo is for Filipinos, for the nation)," said Clark Development Corp. president Antonio Ng, noting the ongoing efforts to rehabilitate the P3-billion park.

He said the Expo has suffered from deterioration and cases of looting since it was closed in 1999.

Until the government stepped in this month, the theater is indeed all-around.

The park's entrance is devoid of the 100 x 50-meter Philippine flag, its several structures, the paint had peeled off or their outlines cracked. Most vines and grasses covered over the place. Most had taken whatever metal pieces there is. Electrical wires and bulbs are missing.

So far, only the amphitheater—the most controversial piece because its construction ran afoul of the original land grant—has been maintained, making it feasible for occasional concerts and exhibitions alike.

Trade Assistant Secretary Angel Dilinyn said the "grand reopening" of the Expo as a trade exhibit, cultural/social and amusement center had been set for April 4 next year, to time for President Macapagal-Arroyo's (GMA) birthday.

The state-owned CDC, the Department of Trade and Industry and Presidential Adviser for North Luzon Renato Diaz are tasked with reviving the Expo.

Rehabilitation

"We are mobilizing internal CDC resources and people for the rehabilitation to reduce out-of-pocket costs," said Ng.

Initially he said, the rest of the materials would reach around P5 million. The rehabilitation budget, however, is now around P7.0 million.

Not all of the park will be spruced up, though. Work will be concentrated on the 3.5-hectare Global City the Sarmiento Complex that is part of the Colonial Plaza, and the amphitheater.

The Global City, which has two trade halls, will house 150 retailers' exhibition from the Bases, Cagayan Valley Central Luzon and the Cordillera.

"We want to highlight the 'One Town, One Product' concept. We want to give small and medium enterprises a showcase for their wares, keeping this will increase their sales, provide them opportunities for benchmarking, compare notes/realities, and get ideas for design, packaging and pricing," Dilinyn said.

Ng said the infrastructure and development of other features of the Expo—the Service Plaza, Millennium Hall and Fun Zone—would be offered to outside investors.

Centennial scare

The Arroyo administration, however, appeared to be making too hid to reopen the so-called Centennial Expo site that had been so-called creating national to the historical milestone that was the centennial of Philippine Independence.

The Senate's blue ribbon committee and the Independent Citizens' Committee created by then President Joseph Estrada and led by former Sen. Heinz Siguenza each released findings of irregularities in separate reports in February 1999.

The Senate report recommended the prosecution of former President Fidel V. Ramos, Public Works Secretary Gregorio Vigilar, Budget Secretary Salvador Enriquez, Trade Secretary Cesar Bautista, Environment Secretary Victor Ramos and Agriculture Secretary Salvador Escudero III for "technical malversation or misappropriation of public funds."

Also recommended for prosecution were former Vice President Salvador Laurel, chair of the National Centennial Corp. and Philippine Centennial Exposition '98 Corp. (Philexpo), MCC president Teodoro Nilo, former CDC president Rainer David, Bases Conversion Development Authority Chair Vicente Buaya, and former Philippine National Construction Corp. president Magtibay Cuio.

Cleared

Comparing the Senate and Siguenza reports, a study by Amado Mendoza Jr., associate professor at the the University of the Philippines' Department of Political Science, says the "crucial issues raised by the same concept that the Senate" were shifted/made to Laurel.

"Ramos and his former Cabinet members claimed that the findings were politically motivated and designed to draw attention away from a scandalous scam involving a relative of Estrada and his budget minister, Benjamin Diokno," said Mendoza.

Then Ombudsman Aniano Desierto, on appointee of Ramos, had cleared the former president in February 2000. Laurel was cleared before his death in 2004.

"What the two committees "failed" to uncover, Mendoza said, was that the centennial project was "used as a ruse for raising funds for the Lakas [-Kampi] campaign," as a Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism report found.

The lingering committee, he said, "failed to report on another possible scandal." This was the ownership of 600 hectares in Clark by Clark's chick mucks, the original private sector partner of the government for the centennial project.

The involved officials, the Senate committee said, gave P5.3 billion to the Expo Pilipino, whose original cost grew from P1.9 billion to P3.1 billion, and to related projects from accrued earnings or from appropriations for centennial projects. The centennial celebration also received P 0.6, 1 million in private donations.

No actions tried to revive the Expo Pilipino in 2003 has failed.

Ng, the fifth CDC president to handle the Expo challenge, is now tasked with leading the revived effort to revive the ills-government-owned.

He said he had to work outside of the 2005 proposal, which has been set aside. The plan, under Administrative Order No. 83, called for the transfer of the NDC's assets and liabilities in the FCCC to the CDC.

"The parties could not agree," Ng said.

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Across the NATION

Flooding prompts Quezon evacuation

LUCENA CITY—MORE THAN 12,000 RESIDENTS FROM at least 14 villages of Lucena City have been evacuated to safer grounds as floods continue to rise.

In Mahitac, Lagnas, the Municipal Disaster Coordinating Council (MDCC) has advised around 9,000 residents of eight barangays to prepare for evacuation if the downpour continued.

Emy Medla, Lucena City social worker, said at least 71 houses have been swept by river current causing from the six schools of Mt. Banahaw.

Heavy rains continued to fall in Quezon province since Monday evening.

The evacuees were moved to several schools and barangay halls serving as evacuation centers.

Classes in all schools were suspended since yesterday noon.

Floods isolated the villages of Tiaong and San Isidro in Antonyan.

Nelson M. Medina, according to MDCC head Emily Dorado, were about to overflow.

"The only set are already warning residents to prepare and, if possible, start transferring to safer places," said Dorado.

Residents of Barangays Lambak, Bayanihan, Pag-asa, Bitaklop, Libis ng Bayan, Malaguicla, San Antonio, and Ibangpura were told to move out.

Those barangays have about 9,000 residents, Dorado said.

Dorado said about one-fourth of the 1,023 hectares of rice plantations in the town were still to be harvested while the remaining areas were already being prepared for planting.

In Sariaya and Sta. Maria towns, officials said they were hoping the rains would stop.

Carlo Medina, Sariaya agriculturist, said farmers there already harvested their palay and were now preparing for another planting season, which starts late December.

He said Sariayan residents have a total plantable area of 800 hectares in the twin-town.

Nimfa Peñaloza, of the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council, said they were monitoring the four disaster-prone towns of Sta. Maria, Mulanay, Buenavista and Sariaya. *Delfin Mallari Jr. and Romeo B. Perez, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Kidnapped engineer escapes Pentagon gang

CAMP AGUINALDO, MAGTANGGOL... The 69-year-old engineer, who was abducted by the Pentagon Gang from North Cotabato, escaped shortly before noon Tuesday, the military said.

Maj. Gen. Agustin Ortega aka, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said Ronnie Arend escaped from the Pentagon gang in Sitio Udto Intercast, Magpetenlanao.

Arend was snatched on Nov. 21 by heavily-armed men while on his way to his farm in Libungan, North Cotabato.

He is now in undisclosed location in southern Mindanao.

In a subsequent raid in Midsayap, North Cotabato during a gun-off for Arend, authorities backed by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) arrested eleven of his captors.

Arrested on Nov. 30 were Ibrahim Ingandal, 28, alias Ian Sacot and Mike Candao, a key leader of the Pentagon gang and the men, Mustapha Imanbeli, 23, and Pendi Kamlonen, 28.

During the raid, authorities recovered Arend's clothes and some P114,000 in cash, which police said was part of the P2.1 million ransom the family paid to the Pentagon.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said Ingandal was also the main suspect in the abduction of a Catabato City businessman.

"He was behind the abduction of businessman Benny Kotah, who, based in our report, was executed by his captors," Kabalu said.

Defense also said Arend made initial ransom payment of P1.5 million to the gang's leader at around 11:30 a.m. *Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ROUNDUP

3 workers dead

Woman raped, freed

Ex-cop nabbed for drugs

Tornado kills 3

NEIGHBOR'S VISIT

Royal Malaysian Navy sailors disembark from their patrol gunboat after arriving at the port city of Zamboanga Dec. 5, 2005. The Philippines and Malaysia Navy will conduct six maritime exercises in Mindanao to enhance their capability in the war against terrorism in the region.

COA, court execs back suspect in molest case

DAGUPAN CITY—HOURS AFTER 11-year-old daughter recently molested at a sightseeing area would never want to experience.

But when the distraught people started to harass her and her daughter after they used the suspected motorist, the family's woes worsened.

The appearance of the victim and her 35-year-old mother created on Nov. 25 when the latter received a call on his mobile phone.

"She daughter] was crying and she could not talk at all. Later, somebody who introduced himself as a policeman, asked me to come to the Dagupan police station as something happened to my daughter," the mother said.

The mother, a teacher in Calasiao town, went to the station and learned that her daughter was sexually molested while aboard a jeepney in Dagupan City, where she will get a ride to Mangaldan, her hometown.

The girl said a man in police and court records described him as 29 years old and a resident of San Miguel, barely identified the victim's jeepney headed her hometown. The man reportedly concealed the act by covering his face with a towel.

The girl said the man's hand and the trembled and cried. The caught the attention of fellow passengers, including a policewoman, PO1 Gilbert Bandan.

Gendan arrested the man and took him and the girl to a police station.

The girl said the May 26 incident was the second time that she saw the man. He saw the suspect two months ago when she boarded a jeepney on her way to Dagupan City.

The girl said during their first encounter, the man asked her name, his home address and his school. Then, the girl said, the man tried to give her a video camera and also with a photograph of a couple having sex.

The girl said she immediately got off the jeep and approached a traffic aide when she saw the man following her.

While the mother and daughter were at the police station on Nov. 26, an official in this city, a Commission on Audit official and a court official arrived to support the suspect. Rolando Estela Zurbito, PIN Northern Luzon Bureau

Korean escapes kidnappers in cop uniforms

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—Six suspected kidnappers clad in police uniforms launched but failed to abduct a Korean businessman in front of the gate of a posh golf course in Laguna's Canlubang Golf and Country Club in Barangay Halang, Calamba City, on Monday morning, police said yesterday.

In a report sent to this camp, Senior Supt. Benjamin Mamerto Cerbo, police director, identified the victim as Hwan Pyohong, 58, president of the Best Chemical Plastics Philippines Inc. located in Barangay Mayapa, Carmona town.

He said Hwan escaped from his abductors who were all armed with high-powered firearms and wearing police uniforms.

The report said the victim was on board his Nissan Cefiro sedan (XBM-775) and was on his way to play golf at the Canlubang Golf and Country Club in Barangay Halang, Calamba, at around 11 a.m. when a Mitsubishi Grandwind (UPB-606) and another car cut him and blocked his way.

Three men wearing police uniforms alighted from one of the vehicles and ordered the victim to disembark from his car.

Thinking that the suspects were real policemen, the victim alighted from his car and tried to find out if he had committed any violation.

But when the victim came out of his car, he was hit with the butt of the rifle of one of the suspects.

Marawit said the suspect then forcibly took the Korean inside their vehicle but the victim fought it out with the suspects and was able to escape to his car.

The Korean then drove his car into the main gate of the golf club and sought the help of security guards.

The suspects fled after the commotion caught the attention of several bystanders and motorists in the area.

Marawit said the victim was immediately brought to the Asian Hospital Hospital in Alabang, Muntinlupa for treatment after suffering contusions to the head and other parts of the body.

The Japanese tried to confirm the incident with Supt. Romeo Arque, Canlubang police chief.

He appointed to the lower cop the story, Arque said in a text message that the incident was just a "botched holdup."

He refused to answer calls by reporters.

A police official, who asked not to be identified, said the businessman Arque probably wanted to hide the incident after he was forced for his alleged failure to provide security to foreigners working in several companies in Cameron.

Just two months ago, a Taiwanese businessman was abducted also near the gate of South-woods Subdivision. Alaelan Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Cotabato airport repair backed

COTABATO CITY—Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesse Robredo is confident that there will be no hassle in the rehabilitation of the Cotabato airport.

But Davao rock on caution to repeat that he will not repeat the P40-million project mistake regarding the airport.

Davao, who also heads the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDC), said he did not hesitate with the affair of the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC), the agency that would implement the project.

"I do not know why we are being blamed and accused of getting the money. This is not us," he said.

Davao said work on the airport was being delayed by the inaction of the DOTC.

"There has been no final disbursement from the agency up to now in spite of our repeated requests to have it released," he said.

Davao told the DOTC has failed to get specific counterpart fund for the project, which is being required by the Department of Budget and Management for International Bond, reports CDMS.

Davao said he sent memorandum to DOTC Manila about the project but there has been no action so far.

The planned closure of the Cotabato airport by mainly disturbed Central Mindanao residents, Davao, particularly the business community.

Dominga Dasalla, PAL vice president for Mindanao, said the airport would remain open if its runway was cleared of pebbles.

Charlie Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Iloilo power plant to shut down; city faces outages

By Hector P. Barges Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—THE CITY FACES power outages starting next week after its four electric supplier announced it would shut down its power plant on Dec. 15 due to continued losses resulting from the lowering of power rates in the city.

The daunting duties of the 72-megawatt diesel-fired plant of the Iloilo Power Corp. (IPC), a subsidiary of Aboitiz Global Corp., would trigger blackouts unless alternative sources of energy were tapped to supply the Iloilo Electric Company (IEC).

Records obtained by the Philippine Daily Inquirer show that the city's 186 barangays with around 63,000 consumers.

In a statement, IPC vice president Jerome Arnaldo said their company has been operating on a loss due to underpayments of Peso amounting to P250 million.

He said their current fuel inventory would last only until Dec. 15 because of the inability to pay for the two months due to Peso's underpayment.

The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) on May 9, 2004 ordered Peso to refund to IEC to reduce its charges by P2 per kilowatt-hour from its rate of P6 per kwh to P4.

On a ruling dated Sept. 16, the Court of Appeals' Ninth Division upheld the ERC decision and denied Peso's petition to nullify the commission's order.

The reduction of the power rates has resulted in a drop in the monthly electric bills of consumers by at least 20 percent.

Peso is petitioning the ERC to restore its charges before the order for a 15% decrease in charges was implemented in 2004.

"What Ilonyi pays up to now was enough to pay for our fuel cost. We are hoping that an immediate solution will be arrived at, to allow us to provide reliable and efficient electric service for the people of Iloilo City on a sustainable basis," said Arnaldo.

Consumers and militant groups, however, lambasted IPC and Peso for threatening to commit such blackouts.

"After talking to leaders of peso in order to form an consumers, they now resort to blackmail," said Regina Alyansang Makabayan Ilonyi Peso's chair Aurelio Bongat.

Bongat urged the national government to intervene and compel people to the public "turnoff of hostage if to the control of monopolies like IPC, Meralco and Peso."

Lawyer Ronnie Bolaybl, dean of the Freedom from Debt Coalition- Iloilo, challenged IPC and Peso to show proof that they were indeed losing because of the reduction of Peso's charges.

Ooops... We did it again!

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Now on its 37th Year of Service to the Nation

'Hard labor' means no cell phones, no VIP treatment

From page A1

getting special treatment, either.

Despite the pleas, defenders of the retired general have continued Harbor criticizing, fearing him will only as official pariah to someone with the outside world.

And his commentaries are being monitored.

"This a just proof to debunk claims of some parties or those who do not believe us or that he isn't being given special treatment," Chief Supt. Cesar Barias, camp commander, said yesterday.

Smuggled

Sentenced by a court-martial last week to two years of detention at hard labor for undeclared wealth and for holding a U.S. "green card" signifying permanent resident status, Garcia has been held at the Philippine National Police Custodial Center since June this year.

Barias said the phones his men confiscated from Garcia in August had been smuggled in to him.

After the phones were taken from him, Garcia formally asked to be exempted from the rule banning personal phones inside the detention center, but this was denied, Barias said.

Sandiganbayan clearance

Barias clarified the PNP rule was simply to provide a detention place for Garcia and not to carry out any punishment ordered by the military court.

"The sole job of the PNP as far as General Garcia is keeping him under our custody, that is all," he said.

The Armed Forces can take custody of Garcia and do whatever it wishes with him, he said.

A military prosecutor earlier explained that officers sentenced to "hard labor" did not actually perform hard work or carry out menial jobs.

The matter of moving Garcia out of Camp Crame, however, must first be cleared with the Sandiganbayan, according to Barias.

Informant inside

If he is ordered transferred elsewhere, there "should be some clarification because it said the Sandiganbayan also gave us the order (placing him) under our custody," Barias said.

Garcia is also being tried at the Sandiganbayan for plunder and perjury.

Barias said that sometime in August, "assets" or informants inside the detention center reported that Garcia was using cell phones—a violation of the rules.

"When we confronted him, he admitted it immediately and surrendered them," he said.

The Custodial Center does not allow mobile phones for security reasons. To escape time in he from Garcia's stand, has either in sources could use his power to plan an escape or cause trouble, officials said.

Peculiar case

The source has a hotline that inmates can use in emergency situations or to contact their lawyers.

On Aug. 11, after he was stripped of his phones, Garcia wrote Barias, saying he needed them to talk to his lawyers do briefing him in numerous cases.

"I understand that this policy should be uniformly applied to all. However, my cases are unlike the others who are being held in the Custodial Center," Garcia said in his letter, a copy of which was obtained by the Inquirer.

"My present predicament of having a very substantial number of cases that involves voluminous documents and allegations that I need to confront is distinctly different from all the other cases of (persons) being held in the center," he said.

Police firm

"Thus, it becomes imperative for me to continuously consult/confer with my lawyers through the cellular phone."

GARCIA requested for exception

But Barias was firm.

"There is no VIP treatment for Garcia," Barias told the Inquirer. "If we do that, other inmates who go regular visitors would surely complain. There is no telling that," Barias said.

Defensor confirms report: No more logging in Samar

From page A1

SITC is owned by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile.

SITC created Najaden Pilkadar earlier said that Terra... our way have been suspended.

"There's no legal ... to the [suppliers] to operate the felling of the timber ban... then the DENR makes a pronouncement like that" he said.

At a news conference where he announced the cancellation of 276 logging agreements covering 1 million hectares, Defensor said Bienvenido Medrano was not impacted when he told reporters about the secretary's committee.

"He came able to discuss matters on the understanding it was very clear," Defensor said of the two-hour meeting with an Catholic bishops on Dec. 2.

"I've already told the bishops that I will no longer give any statement on the matters... You may ask the bishops about my commitments," he said.

After the meeting with Defensor, Medrano announced that the environment secretary had assured the bishops that SITC would not resume operations in Samar.

In settings, the bishops of Basilan, Leyte and Bohol called off an anti-logging rally scheduled for Dec. 8, and their plan to collect 200,000 signatures for a petition urging President Macapagal-Arroyo to cancel SITC's logging permit.

Nature park

The Church, environmental groups and the provincial government in Samar Island have opposed the DENR decision to uphold on Aug. 30 the Order. Senior agreement (TLA) of SITC in a 56,776-ha area inside the 330,000-ha Samar Island Natural Park.

They claimed that Defensor upheld SITC's TLA in a quiet gesture for his court's decision in favor by the Commission on Appointments. Enrile is a member of the CA.

Asked if SITC's TLA was among the 276 forest management agreements cancelled by the DENR, Defensor told the bureau that the company's limited concession area was among those studied and found to have been abused.

"Yun lang is out of the picture because those integrated forest management agreements (IFMA) and community-based management agreements (CBFMAs) were already openly cleared," Defensor said.

Moratorium

The DENR stopped SITC's operations in 1989 as part of a logging moratorium in Samar to pave the way for an inventory of the island's remaining forests. The moratorium was not lifted by subsequent environment secretaries, who wanted for the proclamation of a large part of the island as a ... sanctuary. DENR-and-a-half-a-park in 2003.

Defensor said the study of the forest management agreements covered in Defensor.

"The flaws were unveiled because of violation of the terms and conditions of the agreements. The CBFMAs were described because of the ... tory performances (of these holders)," Defensor said.

Illegal logging is qualified as those and usually cover at least 5,000 ha. CBFMAs are granted into valid communities in the forest reserves and usually cover less than 5,000 ha.

Fronts for illegal loggers

"We've found out that some of these CBFMAs are already being used as fronts for operations of illegal loggers hinder the guise of people's organization asking for the concessions," Defensor said.

For their part, some provincial officials ... ...

Carabao creator remains giddy kid at heart

UNVEILED: Sandy Prieto-Romualdez, inquirer president/CEO with 28 carabaos made of fiberglass sculpted by Sajid Imam and interpreted by leading artists upon the PDI's 28th anniversary theme, "The power of knowing." ALEX DAUD

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his helps so produce rice, which is something so important to us. I would point him out to my playmates and women, and I would say, 'That's my nephew.'"

Many years later, the ingrained affection would take the lighthearted form in Kalikasang Kalabaw and subtleties of famous filipino A. Lipio in the artist's satirical cosmotrips. A. Lipio, which debuted in the Philippine Daily Inquirer when the newspaper was founded in 1985, during the last days of the Marcos regime.

On Oct. 16 this year, Kalikasan was known as Enyrita, the official mascot of the newspaper's 20th anniversary celebration. Aliswa characters and the cosmopolitan crowd at the Philippine Center in New York, where the carnival unfolded, were lifelike colored illustrations from his "Pinoy Age" series, apart invitation of the Philippine consulate.

Kid in the big city

It was Aliswa's first trip to New York—"with help from the Inquirer, which sponsored my trip," he hurriedly adds—and he felt like a kid in the big city.

"It was my time to also tell the Diaspo pausing by seeing the exhibit and laughing," he says. "They could relate to everything they saw."

For example, one of Aliswa's cartoons featured the typical All Saints' day family reunion, with a buffet spread right on top of the family member's tomb.

Aliswa recounts that 10 famed Filipinos came up to him and made suggestions—like, why not put a mahjong set, too? They talked about their own experiences, and shared items with their US-born grandchildren and nephews asking about the celebration in the motherland.

"The drawings became conversation pieces, the connecting line between old and new Filipinos," Aliswa says. "They were able to remember the life they knew before, which they really miss. We were encouraged when we were younger."

Student of the world

The carabaos is a fitting alter ego for its creator, the impish artist who remains a diligent student of the world around him.

Born in Iloilo, Jesus Aliswa Jr is the second of the five children of Jesus Aliswa Sr., who used to work with the Philippine Herald, and Soledad Valdez, a dressmaker from Cebu. Aliswa believes he inherited his artistic bent.

Even as a child, he drew prodigiously and learned to appreciate his mother's talent for filling the walls of their rented apartment with doodles.

His parents' fears that the landlady would be livid were unfounded: the woman actually liked what she saw better.

"It was my first taste of public appreciation," Aliswa says, grinning.

Not wanting to be anything but an artist, Aliswa took up fine arts (major in advertising) at the University of the Philippines, where he immediately joined the social realists.

His contemporaries in the Kamuhan Group included the likes of UP professors Pablo Baens Santos and Egai Fernandez.

"Our work would depict what was happening, and what was happening was depressing—we couldn't paint anything beautiful," Aliswa says.

Thus, his canvases were filled with scenes of poverty, pollution, socialist dreams, and the dark, earthy colors of reallisarus.

'Kabog' Eggie

Aliswa never got to graduate with the batch of 1967, having found odd jobs and failed to finish his electives. In 1974, he applied as an illustrator at Hi, and Ms. magazine, marking his first true publisher and long-term boss/ex Eugenia "Eggie" Apostol.

"I found her wedding ring [ring]," he recalls. "She was so easy to talk to, so Oh. If you were ready to work, game, no more questions asked."

Aliswa managed to weave his penchant for cartoons and political commentary during illustrations for such magazines exhumed as S.F. Lopez and Fr. Joaquin Bernas.

By 1985, with the establishment of the Inquirer, head cartoonist Aliswa began his cartoon strips as "pocketje fuses" (filler) when there was empty column space.

If there were no important personalities to caricature, Rainbow made an appearance, making comments on the day's events.

Before he knew it, Aliswa's carabao had shared billing—and held side conversations—with a gallery of political figures and his predecessor, Atong Ramos's Cabo.

"You really don't plan the comic strip, but it's the script that take time to think up," Aliswa confesses.

He gets his ideas sitting in jeepneys in and from his home in Antipolo—he refuses to drive outside of the immediate domicile—and taking long walks in his. Cosa and other places in downtown Manila.

The observations have apparently struck a chord: His 2003 compilation, "The Best of A. Lipio: Cartoon Strips, 1985-2000," won the Manila Critics Circle National Book Award.

Sharing the talent

Today the 60-year-old Aliswa still lives in Antipolo with his wife of 35 years, Remedios, and their three children: Manuel, 36, who works on documentary films; Miguel, 31, a student of anthropology at the Ateneo; and Isa, 32, who, he swears, is definitely "an artist."

"I think all children start out as artists, but they lose it when they get older," he says. "But when they see a parent doing it all the time, they pursue it."

Nowadays, Aliswa is also doing noninsanity work and teaching fine art—everything from drawing to paper mache—to the children of displaced victims of calamities and "Ingats."

"There we do also as hand-hand-hang 'I'm done with just doing paying work," he declares. "This is something I do for the fulfillment, and it makes me really happy. What else is an artist's talent for if you don't share it?"

He works every day in his stockpile studio, and hopes to complete enough paintings soon for a solo exhibit. "I still like to paint when's around me. I love can you paint any other color except what you know and what you experience?" he says.

Aliswa remembers again the colorful realm of the Filipinos who come to see his work in New York: "These people have so much in terms of material things, but they're just really sad looking. They don't dream anymore. I don't envy them, really. Pa those here in our country are lucky because we still have so many dreams."

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Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

Man who sold stolen car charged

By DJ Yap

THE POLICE YESTERDAY FILED charges against a man who illegally tried to sell a stolen Mercedes Benz during a buy-bust operation in a Quezon City subdivision on Nov. 17.

The suspect, Maurice Velasco, was charged with car theft and violation of the anti-carnapping law by the Traffic Management Group (TMG) of the Philippine National Police in the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office.

After charges were finally filed, police officer name the car was registered in the Land Transportation Office, and two more unidentified suspects.

Velasco was arrested on Nov. 17 after he tried to sell the luxury car that was later discovered to had been taken at gunpoint from Manuel Serrano on Dead Drive in Ortigas Center, Pasig City on Oct. 24, police said.

Serrano identified the man who took the car as Brian Dalay, one of three suspected carjackers killed during the commercial Ortigas shootout with TMG operatives on Nov. 7.

Police investigators showed that the Benz's chassis and motor numbers had been tampered with. The car's license plate had also been changed to WTS 977 from the original XDO 285.

Velasco was arrested with Fredrik Tuazon when[illegible] tried to sell a Nissan Patrol which had been taken at gunpoint from the driver of TV host Iya Villania. Four other hot cars were recovered during the operation in Teus Real Subdivision, Barangay Commonwealth, Quezon City.

4 cops, ex-lawman nabbed for extortion

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FOUR POLICEMEN AND A RETired police official have been arrested for allegedly extorting P400,000 in cash a businessman in Antipolo City.

Antipolo City Police chief Supt. Primitivo Tabujara identified the policemen as PO3 Emelito Salazar, PO2 Rolando Castillo Jr., PO1 Rey Aguera, PO1 Enrique Asuncion and retired Insp. Jesus de Guzman.

They were arrested on Monday afternoon after businessman Felix Soriv Jr., 46, sought the help of the police.

According to Soriv, the suspects, armed with a search warrant, raided his house-to-house gun Bello Hut on Nov. 25 and seized fake stolen tablets for video compact discs.

But instead of filing charges, the suspects allegedly demanded P400,000 in exchange for dropping the case against him.

Soriv initially gave P100,000 and promised to pay the balance of P150,000 on Dec. 5. To ensure that he would come up with the money, the suspects also took his license.

The trader went to the police which set up an entrapment in Soriv's house at 1:35 p.m. Monday. When the suspects received the money from the trader, they were promptly arrested.

The suspects are now in the custody of the city police.

METROBRIEFS

Suspected swindlers fall

BEWARE of shady schemes disguised as business opportunities. The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) rescued this warning yesterday with the arrest of a college dean here and his wife who reportedly duped a businessman of P3.1 million through an elaborate scheme involving other syndicate members. Suspects Dennis and Nina Estrada were brought to the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office for inquest, according to NBI Special Task Force (STF) chief Reginald Brocka. Reynaldo Bonnevie. The couple's alleged cohorts, a certain Mr. Santos and Mr. Marquez, Eduardo Carreon, Benito Liwag, Edwin Abalos, Arman Ramirez, an alias Rod Hagan, and five others, remain at large. According to the NBI STF investigation report, the victim, Elizabeth Palad, filed a complaint for swindled which had on the Estradas had him. 22 after the suspects made off with millions of his money. The report said the syndicate members had divided themselves into two groups and approached Palad separately to inquire about the warehouse she was selling. The victim said the groups later urged her to get involved in their businesses, promising her huge profits. When one group asked her for a P3.1 million loan to pay off debts, she agreed. But when she tried to collect her money, the suspects failed to refer to the loan. Marjorie C. Ortiz

Almost a clean getaway

TWO ARMY men were arrested yesterday for their suspected involvement in the death of a taxi driver in Makati City Monday night. Pfc. Richard Reyes Resurreccion and Pfc. Randy Avendaño of the 101st Military Police Battalion would have gotten away had the license and left the spoiler behind in the back seat of Roberto Salinas's taxi. Salinas, 57, was found dead inside his cab which was awkwardly parked on the northbound side of the Buendia flyover in Makati City. He had been shot once in the head. After finding Resurreccion's wallet which contained his military identification card, an AFP/PNP Joint Task Force and Police Barangay and Love Association Inc. squad, driven by Resurreccion, and an officer, the police went to his quarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig and arrested him. Avendaño surrendered hours later, said Makati Police Chief of homicide unit chief, Senior Insp. Gary Reyes. "We are now charging what her any of the driver's belongings was lost, indicating a case of robbery with homicide. If there's more, then it's a case of homicide. But we are still establishing the motive behind the killing," said Reyes. Sarah V. Delmendo

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'Roldan wanted to kill boy'

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

ROLDAN

FORMER CONGRESSman and actor Dennis Roldan ordered at one point the killing of a 3-year-old boy whose kidnapping he had allegedly orchestrated, five days before the victim was rescued, a suspect who turned state witness told the court yesterday.

But Alberto Pagdanganan, who was Roldan's alleged right hand during the kidnapping, said he refused to kill the boy.

WANG

Roldan and six others are accused of kidnapping a Filipino-Chinese boy on Feb. 9 in Pasig City. They allegedly asked for more than P250 million in ransom at the start of negotiations. Roldan, whose real name is Mitchell Gumabao, has denied the charges.

In his testimony yesterday, Pagdanganan said Roldan even personally negotiated with the boy's mother through a phone call on Feb. 18. The actor also reportedly threatened to torture the boy by pricking his penis if she did not give in to his demand, he added.

The ninth witness of the prosecution, Pagdanganan detailed before the court how Roldan and his alleged girlfriend Suzette Wang allegedly recruited him exactly a month before the kidnapping. Wang remains at large.

Pagdanganan said Roldan and Wang initially promised him a P15-million share in the ransom. He said Roldan also gave him P225,000 for the operation, adding that he used part of the money to rent two houses in Quezon City where the group brought the boy.

Pagdanganan also admitted he had asked the others accused in the case—Romeo Orcajada, Adrian Domingo, Noel San Andres and his wife Rowena—who were all his employees, to join the operation. The witness said he started having second thoughts and even offered to return P150, 000 of his own money to Roldan. He said he also heard the actor call up the boy's school on Feb. 8 to confirm if there would be classes the following day, which coincided with the Chinese New Year. The group carried out the kidnapping the next day.

Pagdanganan also told the court he met with Roldan, Wang and Octavio Garces several times in a restaurant reportedly owned by Roldan to plan the kidnapping. His statements corroborated earlier testimonies of policemen who conducted surveillance operations on the group and saw the four in the restaurant.

Pagdanganan also admitted to have arranged the transfer of the boy to at least three safe houses, on Roldan's orders. Two days after the transfer, the state witness allegedly received a phone call from Roldan ordering him to kill the boy.

Pagdanganan refused and phoned Garces, who advised him not to follow Roldan. Garces is also set to testify against the actor and Wang.

Roldan's lawyer Siegfrid Fortun tried to shatter Pagdanganan's credibility, introducing information about pending cases against the state witness.

But Pasig City Regional Trial Court Judge Agnes Carpio said only court convictions could be brought up against a witness to establish his character.

BUSINESS

Editor Raoul D. Pangalangan
Assistant Editor Gemma G. Nepomuceno

PC BUYER'S GUIDE
The No.1 Computer Magazine

November inflation rises to 7.1%

As prices of food, services go up

By Michelle N. Remo

CONSUMER PRICES JUMPED 7.1 PERCENT IN November from year-ago levels, buoyed largely by increases in the cost of food and services, the National Statistics Office reported yesterday.

This brought the 11-month average increase in consumer prices to 7.7 percent, safely within the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' full-year inflation forecast of 7.9 percent.

The November inflation figure also settled at the high end of the 6.7 to 7.1 percent projection of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) for the month.

"Higher production costs of packaging materials raised prices of canned fish and selected seafood items, generally upon most of the regions including NCR as the Christmas season came near," Neda Director General Augusto Santos said in a statement.

The Neda estimated that average inflation for the whole year would reach 7.7 percent, taking into account recent increases in fuel prices and transport fares, and the implementation of the VAT in services.

The new VAT law, which took effect Nov. 1, expanded the coverage of the tax to include, among others, oil and electricity, and will raise the tax rate from 10 to 12 percent in February next year. The increase in the VAT rate will push next year's projected inflation higher than this year's.

Compared with prices the previous month, November prices were higher by 0.8 percent. The month-on-month increase in prices was partly due to the higher cost of oil and electricity.

Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) raised its rates by 65 centavos a kilowatt hour last month. Prices of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), kerosene, gasoline, diesel and regular oil were also raised last month.

The Neda official noted that as of Nov. 30, domestic pump prices increased by 1.8 percent to an average of P53.50 a liter from the previous month's P52.50.

Although oil prices jumped, Santos

PAL PRESIDENT and COO Jimmy Bautista, PAL vice chair and treasurer Mariano Tanenglian, sign the purchase agreement with Airbus, represented by its senior VP for customer affairs-Asia, Paul Shirley.

PAL acquiring 18 Airbus jets in major refleeting move

By Clarissa L. Batino

ASIAN GLOBAL CARRIER PHILIPPINE AIRlines yesterday launched an $840-million, three-year fleet upgrade involving the purchase of nine aircraft and the lease of four planes from Airbus to expand its domestic and regional operations.

The package includes a firm order for nine brand-new A320s and options for five more new A320s. In addition to the 14 aircraft covered by the Airbus deal, PAL will also lease two brand-new A320s and two A319s from GE Commercial Aviation Services, the world's largest aircraft lessor.

PAL vice chair and treasurer Mariano Tanenglian signed for the flag carrier while Airbus senior vice president for customers affairs-Asia Paul Shirley represented the European airplane manufacturer.

PAL president Jaime Bautista said the fleet upgrade would improve the company's on-time performance, boost its image and allow it to fly to more domestic and regional routes.

He said flights to Cebu, for instance, would be launched next year and expanding operations in Japan and China were also being reviewed.

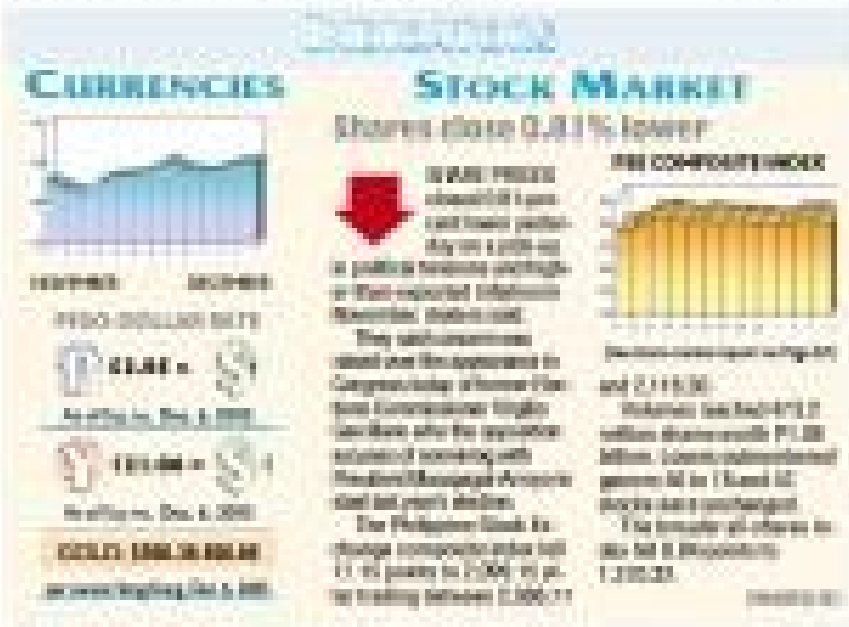
Fuel and maintenance costs, which account for more than 40 percent of overhead, should become less of a factor in operations, he added.

Savings from fuel and operations, he said, should offset the costs of paying for the new aircraft. PAL's fuel factor is now at more than 30 percent against only 17 percent before world crude prices started going up.

"With the new planes, PAL will serve as many as seven more cities, allow us to offer competitive rates and make our fleet one of the youngest in the region," Bautista said.

Newer planes, he added, would allow a

WHAT'S INSIDE
Taipanic tangle
Finance expects '06 deficit to hit P115B
Economy measures up for scrutiny



New Zealand commits ODA assistance until 2009

Focus on public governance, socio-economic environment

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT OF NEW Zealand has disclosed its plan to provide official development assistance to the Philippines for another three years, saying it is intended to help the latter achieve the goal of improving public governance and socio-economic environment.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said in a statement that the New Zealand government has already initiated talks with local officials for the implementation of the $20.003 country program for the Philippines for 2006 to 2009.

NZAID, or the New Zealand Agency for International Development, intends to extend its assistance for the Philippines on programs and programs that will cater to capacity building for local government units, education, indigenous people, biodiversity, resource management, human rights and gender equality, among others.

"The program will also focus on NZAID's interventions on a modest number of geographic regions in Southern Philippines, effectiveness and impact of delivery and monitoring," said NZAID Director Dan Clarke.

He added that previous local activities like Conflict Assessments Region and Mindanao would be among the intended beneficiaries of the ODA programs and projects.

The amount of the intended ODA support will be determined after discussions between Philippine and New Zealand representatives are completed.

But for fiscal year 2005-2006, New Zealand's ODA allocation for the Philippines reached $1.71 million (about P108 million), or slightly higher than the previous fiscal year's $1.29 million (about P1.26 billion).

"The hope this will be the continuation of a good partnership between the two countries. New Zealand shall continue to work closely with NEDA in considering this increase into tangible activities supportive of our Country Program Strategy," said Neda Assistant Director Dennis Balanscia Tangcalan.

NZAID is the agency responsible for managing New Zealand's official development assistance for various countries. Its assistance is usually geared toward the goals of poverty alleviation, equitable economic development, sustainable management of basic needs, and establishment of sustainable livelihood.

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PAL acquiring 18 Airbus jets

. . .

least turnaround time that was essential in improving PAL's schedule.

The refinancing is PAL's first since 1996 and will be its biggest investment since the company began in 16 year debt rehabilitation in 2009 over its $1.3 billion in obligations. The flagcarrier's debt are now down to $1.1 billion.

The A-320s will arm 114 in the economy class and 12 in business class while the A-330s will have 220 economy seats and eight business class seats.

PAL's senior vice president and chief business officer Andrew Huang said the company would finance the acquisition with a combination of internal funds and non-debts.

Existing creditors such as the export-import banks of the United Kingdom, Germany and France have agreed to extend new loans to PAL for this round of refinancing. Foreign and local commercial lenders are also offering loans to the flagcarrier.

The $600-million loan cited by PAL was based on the list price, which included the free options. List prices are usually much more than the actual purchase cost.

Philippine Airlines competitor, Cebu Air Incific, has chartered three years following also with its four A320s and 12 A-

Huang said PAL had remained the dominant player in the country and was either first, second or third in all the markets where it operates.

Cesar Chiong, PAL senior assistant vice president, said that two planes would be arriving in 2006, six in 2007 and five in 2008. Should the flag carrier exercise its option to buy five more, those planes will be arriving from 2009 to 2012.

November inflation rises

. . .

sized that the increase was just minimal compared with the 10-percent YOY rate. Oil prices did not increase by 10 percent, despite the 16-percent YOY rate because of mitigating measures such as the lowering tariffs on imported oil and a cut in the excise tax on oil products.

A sustained improvement in fuel prices and the peso dollar exchange rate would also trim per inflationary pressures from the NIC, the Socio-Economic Planning Filipinos said yesterday.

But despite this favorable trend, SEP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the current monetary authority would continue to exercise caution in monetary management given continuing threats to inflation.

"We will continue to watch out for any adverse shifts in expectations and second round effects as a result of these developments," Tetangco said.

Tetangco said pressures from the Oil and other stocks "could be muted by easing fuel pump rates and the appreciation of the peso especially if these favorable price trends are sustained."

The BSP chief expects the local currency to trade between 53 and 55 against the dollar next year.

Some analysts said the BSP might ease interest rates for the fourth time this year at this month's policy meeting with high oil prices likely to persist next year.

The inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee expects oil prices to stay high at $50 to $60 a barrel.

NDB a report from Doris Dumlao

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Unit/Lot	Item Description	Approved Budget for the Contract	Price Validity	Delivery Period
1 Lot		P 1,500,000.00	Thirty (30) Calendar Days	Forty-five (45) Calendar Days
2 Lots		P 2,000,000.00	Thirty (30) Calendar Days	Sixty (60) Calendar Days
3 Lots		P 500,000.00	Thirty (30) Calendar Days	Sixty (60) Calendar Days
4 Lots		P 1,000,000.00	Thirty (30) Calendar Days	Sixty (60) Calendar Days

Activities	Responsibility	Venue
1. Publication of Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid	Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)	Various Newspaper of General Circulation, Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System (PhilGEPS) and Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Website
2. Issuance of Bid Documents	BAC Secretariat	DOST Main Building
3. Pre-Bid Conference	BAC Secretariat	DOST Main Building
4. Deadline for Submission and Receipt of Bids	BAC Secretariat	DOST Main Building
5. Opening of Bids / Evaluation of Bids	BAC	DOST Main Building
6. Post-Qualification	BAC	DOST Main Building
7. Approval and Notice of Award	Head of the Procuring Entity	DOST Main Building
8. Contract Signing	Head of the Procuring Entity / Supplier	DOST Main Building
9. Notice to Proceed	BAC Secretariat	DOST Main Building

ICTSI, ATI each want slice of N. Harbor

By Clarissa S. Balino

THE COUNTRY'S TWO BIGGEST PORT OPERATORS, International Container Terminal Services Inc. and Asian Terminals Inc., want to participate in the privatization of the North Harbor, which is expected to take place in the first quarter of 2006, a senior official said.

The board of the Philippine Ports Authority will meet this week to study the terms of reference for the planned privatization of North Harbor, said Raul Sanvicente, assistant to the PPA general manager.

Sanvicente said that the PPA has not received a financial offer from either ICTSI or ATI because the terms of reference have yet to be disclosed. But he said he had talked to the two parties and both had expressed their interest.

The PPA official refused to say whether the agency would bid out just one concession for a single operator, as originally planned, or if it would allow several operators to operate three different terminals.

The privatization of North Harbor was first mapped out in 1999, but the proposal actually dated back to the Aquino administration.

It was recommended that a single concession should be up for bid to ensure big investment.

ICTSI and ATI had planned to pool their resources and, together, bid for the project due to the massive investment needed.

But the business community wanted more terminals to be auctioned off. It urged the agency not to allow a single port operator. The issue had dogged the planned sale for years.

Recently, the PPA gave in to the clamor of the business community to allow more operators in on the port.

According to sources, the PPA is now inclined to bid out several terminals instead of one.

ATI and ICTSI are engaged in the handling of container and bulk cargoes. They operate in the Port of Manila, the country's biggest port which most foreign ships dock.

Cargo-handling consists of stevedoring, or marine or cargo handling work on deck, and the all-think core of shipping lines or consignee operators that use container yards far from the port.

AUB sees ₱600-M profit in 2005

By Doris C. Dumlao

ARUBA INTERNATIONAL BANK is expected to post P600 million in net profit this year, about 27 percent better than the P467 million registered a year ago.

AUB president Abraham Co said the bank was aiming to hit another P600 million next year, with consumer lending seen to remain the main growth driver.

He said there was no urgent need for the bank to raise capital at present. The bank had a capital base of P4.6 billion as of Sept. 30, equivalent to a capital adequacy ratio of 16.5 percent or more than double the regulatory requirement of 10 percent.

The bank posted a net income of P518 million for the first nine months of the year, up by 9% percent from year ago level. This is equivalent to an annualized return on equity of 14 percent.

Total operating income from January to September improved by 35 percent to P1.7 billion while net interest margin rose by 13 percent to P805 million from P709 million.

Operating expenses amounted to P442 million or 38 percent better than the P375 million level a year ago.

The bank's total assets stood at P22.6 billion or 22 percent up from last year's P17.7 billion. Total deposits likewise grew by 27 percent to P15.3 billion over a year ago.

The bank's non-performing loan ratio improved further to 8.12 percent compared to the previous year's ratio of 9.72 percent.

Shares close ...

From page B1

"Castillano's is some grass could see political noise once again build up," JP Morgan said in a note to clients, warning that "the President's political support has dissipated over the course of the past few months and there is growing sense that this erosion is expected to continue."

Investors were also worried about the announcement by the National Statistics Office that the consumer price index was 7.1 percent year-on-year in November, exceeding forecasts of the central bank.

"High inflation also raises fears of a hearing interest rate increase, which is a dampener for the equities market because this would mean higher borrowing rates and limited expenses for companies," said Jonathan Fowlie of Banco de Oro Universal Bank.

Most actively traded Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. fell P1.0 to P1,750. AFP

Taipannic tangle

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

LUCIO TAN IS DEFINITELY NOT rolling over and allow fellow tuipan John Gokongwei Jr. have his airline for breakfast. Tan's Philippine Airlines yesterday signed an agreement with Airbus to acquire up to 18 A320 planes, the same jets that Gokongwei's Cebu Pacific is now gradually deploying in its aim to seize majority market share from PAL by 2009.

"It's a dream. Everybody dreams," a confident PAL president Jaime Bautista said, when asked about Cebu Pacific's drive for pole position.

"With the refinancing, [it] would not only become Asia's oldest airline, but still have one of the youngest fleet as well."

Tan himself was not present yesterday—the tuipan was said to be in China trying to win more business from his land of birth—but his bosses, SM vice chairs Hortensia Sy-Coson and Teresita Sy-Coyuiton, signed for the $843-million deal, witnessed by Tan's own sons, Lucio Jr. and Michael.

According to the grapevine, PAL will put in no less than 15 percent of the $840 million for the new planes, with the rest to be financed by a consortium of European export agencies, the consortium's group due PAL said more about $1.3 billion from its fleet of Aquinos and Tomas era cast-me-not refleeting.

As the Airbuses arrive, PAL would return the six Boeing 737s it leases, as well as sell the lone B757 it owns.

PAL's debt decline, the Cebu-based Air Philippines will continue to be no budget carrier and counterbid to the aggressive marketing tactics of Cebu Pacific. According to theaters, Cebu Pacific has already shifted from being a no-frills, budget carrier to a low-cost carrier, with its introduction of meals in its flights.

Despite heavier organ consumption, the five B737-300s of Air Philippines can compete with Cebu Pacific's new Airbuses because the Boeings have been leased at a much cheaper rate, theaters said.

With employee complement now down to 7,400 employees and 31 aircraft, or a 229:1 ratio as against Cebu Pacific's 86:1 ratio, PAL will now streamline its West Coast operations by early 2006, when the flag carrier relocates its reservation, accounting and related back-office transactions to the Philippines. Bautista said PAL has higher personnel-aircraft ratio than Cebu Pacific since it also maintains a trans-Pacific fleet, in addition to flying to Asian destinations and Middle Eastern routes whose foreign airlines require additional manpower and cabin complement.

In comparison, US budget carriers typically have 100:1 personnel-plane ratio, he added. Yesterday's signing was held in the Makati Shangri-La Quezon B function room, ironically the same venue where Cebu Pacific announced the Airbus acquisition.

Whatever the Cebu Pacific bandwidth was facing the other side of the room, PAL's was facing right straight to the Aves.

For blog chit followers (what's Gokongwei's net?), go figure.

Heard through the grapevine

PHILIPPINE National Bank has asked the Supreme Court to reinstate former Solicitor General Francisco Chavez, after the Court of Appeals found the decision challenged lawyer Jovice guilty of "contumacious" [illegible] appealed [illegible] conclusion says.

(Email: cocktails_pdi@inbox.ph or cocktails_pdi@yahoo.com)

9 groups keen on developing 16 wind sites

By Abigail L. Ho

NINE LOCAL AND FOREIGN FIRMS AND consortia have expressed interest to develop-

ing the 16 new wind sites that the Department of Energy is planning to auction off by mid-March next year.

In a presentation during a wind energy conference yesterday, Energy Utilization Management Bureau director Hanis Manosa said these firms would have the first crack at the potential sites. If they could complete all the necessary requirements, their desired wind sites would no longer be included in the auctioning round, Mr. Manosa said.

The companies that have expressed interest in the potential sites included First Gen Renewables Inc. for sites in Ilugo City and Casecnan in Negros Occidental; Benguet Corp. for those in Allen-Lavezares and Gallaway City in Northern Samar and Norton Petroleum Corp. for those in Ilocos and Baldoino in Pangasinan and San Andres in Quezon.

The other interested parties are the Philippine National Oil Co. Energy Development Corp. for the Batong Buoy bin site; Trans-Asia Renewable Energy Corp. for the Mercedes, Camarines Norte wind area and Coastal Power Development Corp. for the Ilocos, Camarines Norte site.

A consortium composed of Transnational Diversified Corp., Asia Clear Power Corp. and Cointreau Palauhdar Energy Inc.—is eyeing two wind sites: Carmen and Cebu, both in Cebu.

Transnational by itself is keen on developing three sites, including those in Pinugay in Ilocos Norte, Maconacon in Isabela and Tagaytay in Cavite. Asia One is also eyeing a potential site in Quezon.

The DOE last year continued the Wind Connecting Round values it offered 16 potential wind sites.

Of the 16 sites, one commercial contract had been issued to three firms for the development of five areas.

Philippine Hybrid Energy Systems Inc. got three FCCs for wind projects in Mindoro, Nabaco in Mindoro and Tablas in Romblon, having a combined capacity of 38 megawatts (MW).

Trans-Asia Renewable Energy Corp. was awarded a contract for a 30-MW project in Real, Tanguisan, while San Carlos Wind Power Corp. was given the right to develop 25 MW of wind potential in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental.

Several firms have also submitted expressions of interest for the 11 other sites, while some are already conducting pre-feasibility studies on the potential areas.

Lepanto in talks with prospective foreign partners

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

LEPANTO CONSOLIDATED MINING, THE country's top gold producer, is in talks with foreign investors for three of its major mining projects.

Lepanto president Bryan Yap told business yesterday that Zijin Mining Group Co. Ltd. of China remained interested in Lepanto's $100-million copper mine at Mankayan, Benguet province and other mining properties.

Talks are still ongoing with Zijin although no agreement has been signed yet as of the time. The company has already done due diligence on Lepanto's Mankayan mine site.

The Mankayan mines produce more than 200 ounces of gold a day.

Mining operations at the Mankayan site consist of two of Lepanto's projects, Victoria I and Teresa (formerly Victoria II). It was the subject of a labor strike a few months ago.

Yap also said it was too early to comment on a report indicating that Zijin would be given 56 percent control of the the Mankayan copper mine if it would infuse $58 million in to the project.

Aside from Mankayan, Lepanto is in talks with Canadian firm Frontier Mines for its Far South East gold project also in Benguet province. Frontier is undertaking a due diligence on the project.

Yap said there were other investors interested in the project. He, however, refused to identify them.

Lepanto owns 60 percent of the South East and is willing to get diluted to allow an investor to infuse fresh capital into the project.

Lepanto has also received proposals for the exploration of its Kalayaan mining project in Siyalgao del Norte under affiliate Manila Mining Corp.

Semirara declares cash dividend

SEMIRARA MINING CORP. WILL DECLARE A cash dividend equivalent to 28 percent of its 2005 net income or about P1.28 per share. It has yet to set the record and payment dates.

Semirara expects a four-fe quarter profit of P774 million and an end-2005 net profit after tax of P1.6 billion.

The company's board resolved at a meeting last week to set aside one-fifth of its income for dividends to honor its commitment to local and foreign investors early this year when it sold 46,875 million shares in an international share offering.

The company continues to forge material transaction from the job in anticipation of Calaca plant No. 2's resumption of operations and commissioner assured capacity.

Total materials moved from January to September this year almost equaled that for the whole of 2004. The January-September coal production this year was less than last year's.

Finance expects '06 deficit to hit ₱115B

By Michelle V. Rama

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET deficit would be reduced to P115 billion next year if the passage of the proposed 2006 budget would be delayed by three months, the longest delay seen by finance officials.

But while this would help the government's fiscal position look better, the Department of Finance is unhappy with the delay because it would mean no improvement in its budget for infrastructure and basic services. It would also result in the deferment of the salary hike for government workers, the DOF said.

The last time government workers got a salary hike was in 2000.

The Arroyo administration's fiscal program for 2006 placed the deficit for the year at P125 billion.

The possible delay in the passage of the proposed 2006 national budget would force the government to cut its expenditure program at the 2006 level, which was lower than the program for next year.

The DOF said expenditures for 2006 would reach only P1.69 trillion, lower than the P1.89 trillion stated in the proposed 2006 budget if the 2005 expenditure program would be used in the first three months next year.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the DOF was expecting a one- to three-month delay in the passage of the 2006 budget since Congress was preoccupied with other matters, such as the 'Hello Garci' hearing.

The finance chief said the DOF was hoping the delay would be shortened to prevent the 2006 fiscal program from being significantly revised.

With a three-month delay, operating expenditures would be trimmed down to P502.9 billion, from the original program of P502.7 billion. Expenditures for capital outlay, meanwhile, would be cut to P152.47 billion, from the proposed P169.4 billion.

Sec. Manuel Villar had asked the DOF and the Department of Budget and Management to present estimates of expenditures under a scenario of a delayed passage of the 2006 budget and of a totally truncated 2005 budget.

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Ecozone measures up for scrutiny

By Michelle V. Rorre and Rosvel W. Domingo

A HOUSE COMMITTEE YESTERDAY approved for deliberations two bills seeking to grant tax amnesty to firms doing business in the former US military installations, and qualify them for fiscal incentives.

The committee on ways and means approved House Bill No. 4999, which covers the tax amnesty on all deficiency taxes, as well as duties, interests, surcharges and penalties the locators in Camp John Hay and Clark Field incurred as a consequence of a recent Supreme Court ruling.

The second bill, HB No. 4981, seeks to grant similar benefits with the fiscal incentives enjoyed by firms registered with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza).

The high tribunal earlier ruled that among the economic zones created by the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA), only the one in Subic should be covered by the fiscal incentives provided under Republic Act No. 9227. The law does not grant the same incentives to other economic zones, the Supreme Court said.

The high court ruling therefore made the locators in Clark, Camp John Hay and other smaller economic zones—such as the Poro-Point Special Economic Zone and Mactan Special Economic Zone—liable for back taxes and duties that run into billions of pesos.

The American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines yesterday said new laws granting tax amnesty and incentives to investors in the economic zones need to be passed to protect firms that were enticed to locate there.

AmCham executive director Robert Jones said a number of member firms, including two Fortune 500 companies, have invested in the Clark SEZ over the past decade.

Jones said the the removal of the tax incentives would have serious consequences. It could cause the firms to reconsider their decision to invest in the Philippines and relocate elsewhere in the region.

For First Pacific, it's back to square one

By Clarissa S. Ruden

FIRST PACIFIC CO. LTD., A HONG KONG-based conglomerate owned by the Salim family, will sell its $300-million stake back to some other possible acquisitions in the food, telco and infrastructure business across the region, its top official said.

First Pacific managing director Manuel Pangilinan said the company would move forward after it failed to its bid to acquire Bell Telecom Pacific.

The Lorenzo family sold its 49 percent stake in Bell Telecom to Indonesia's Grup Gajah Tunggal of Anie Tampos, thwarting First Pacific's plans.

Now, the company's back to square one, Pangilinan said.

Not the type to cry over spilled milk, Pangilinan said that there are several companies that for acquisitions all over the region.

In the Philippines alone, he said, there are numerous opportunities especially in infrastructure and power.

"We are still focusing on food, telco and infrastructure," Pangilinan said in an interview.

Pangilinan founded First Pacific in the early 1980s among the capital of Indonesia's Salim family.

First Pacific's numbers came from the proceeds of its $300-million, five-year corporate bonds early this year, which are exchangeable into shares of PLDT.

NutriAsia seeks $215-M loan to finance Del Monte acquisition

By Elizabeth L. Sánchez

NUTRIASIA PACIFIC LTD., the joint venture company formed by conglomerate Hong Kong-based Campos, is and food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp., is securing $215 million to finance its purchase of the to pineapple products unit Del Monte Pacific Ltd., industry sources told BusinessWorld.

Sources earlier interested it would get loans from HSBC Holdings Plc, state-led Development Bank of Philippines (DBP) and Bank. De Oro Universal Bank to finance the acquisition.

Industry sources estimated that Del Monte was worth around $465 million based on March-end bid of 30.62 cents a share for the remaining shares.

Last Dec. 2, Manila-listed SMC valued Del Monte at $1.14 billion or a total of $265.3 million with an additional payment of $1 million.

The sale—initialed on Nov. 11—completed the exit of the Lewises from Del Monte.

Sources said completing the takeover would require either equity or capital infusion by San Miguel and the Campos group.

Credit analyst Veni Arnaldo of Fitch Ratings Services, meanwhile, said in a statement yesterday that San Miguel has enough cash to fund its investment in Del Monte.

It estimated that San Miguel's investment in the joint venture would be more than $100 million.

As of end-September last year, San Miguel has P2.9 billion in $240 million in cash.

S&P also said that the recent decision by San Miguel to acquire Del Monte would not by itself have a rating impact on the company's long-term foreign currency credit rating (BB/Negative).

The acquisition is made the eight a joint venture among San Miguel Pacific Ltd., which is 50 percent owned by the Campos family and 42 percent by San Miguel.

DMPL also said that the recent decision by San Miguel to acquire Del Monte Fresh rights for the Philippines not the Indian subcontinent.

It is involved in the manufacture of canned fruits, juice drinks, and vegetables, and has one of the world's largest pineapple plantations.

Del Monte, in an announcement, is in line with San Miguel's strategy of enhancing its position in the food business, and to diversifying its business through overseas acquisitions.

San Miguel completed the acquisition of Australian food company Purefoods Tecnopro, National Foods Ltd., in June 2005, and is in the process of integrating its domestic and regional food business under National Foods.

DISCLOSURES

SAN MIGUEL Corp. will bid an additional 19,340 common shares tomorrow, Dec. 7.

LEPANTO Consolidated Mining Co. will begin trading an additional 20.98 million common shares tomorrow, Dec. 7.

JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. disclosed that from Nov. 21 to Dec. 2, a total of 8,700 shares were exercised and bids paid for under the company's Stock Option Plan. This is top the number of Treasury Shares to 20.96 million shares.

CONCRETE Aggregates Corp. will hold a special stockholders' meeting on Jan. 26, 9 a.m. at the Board Room of the Ortigas & Co. Limited Partnership on the 4th floor of the Ortigas Building, Ortigas Avenue, Pasig City. Stockholders on record as of Dec. 16 must be notified by notice of and to vote at the said meeting. Circulated by Aurelio Alfonso, PSE Associate

Canadian firm gets DENR nod to pursue $2-B mine project

By Christine A. Gapican

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONment and Natural Resources (DENR) has reinstated the mining permit of Crew Minerals Corp., allowing the Canadian firm to pursue its $2-billion nickel project in Mindoro.

Leo Jasareno, head of the DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau mining investments division, said Crew Minerals, a subsidiary of Crew Gold based in Canada, needed to revise a prefeasibility study of the project.

Former DENR Secretary Heherson Alvarez reportedly canceled the permit in 2003, after he learned that the area—located right inside a watershed—comprised part of the Mangyan tribe's ancestral domain.

But according to Jim Sinclair, Crew Gold president and CEO, the mining permit of Crew Gold's Philippine subsidiary expired four years ago.

Environment Secretary Michael T. Defensor has given the green light for the Canadian firm to explore the mineral site in Aglubang, Mindoro.

The Crew Minerals in March 2004 applied for a Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA).

Sinclair earlier said that Crew Gold would put up a nickel processing plant that would be equipped with high-pressure acid leach technology to recover nickel and cobalt from ore.

This is similar to the technology being used by Rio Tuba Mining Corp. in its Coral Bay nickel project in Palawan province.

The Mindoro project is a joint undertaking of Rio Tuba and Japan's Sumitomo Metal Mining Co. Ltd.

Sinclair said that Crew Gold would also pursue other mineral ventures, such as the Pantukan sulfur project in Negros Oriental.

Crew Development Corp., which is based in Vancouver, acquired the Mindoro gold mine concession when it took over the Norwegian company Minoro in 1999.

In December 2000, a Crew subsidiary, Aglubang Mineral Corporation, was granted a Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) to explore and develop the 2,500 hectare concession area for 25 years.

FATHER, CRAFTSMAN, VENDOR A Batasan man holds his sleeping daughter in his arms as he tends to the wood products, which he crafted with his own hands. There are no actual trading posts in Bagac. Most craftsmen in the area tend to sell their wares right in their own homes.

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Use authorized software, call centers urged

By Rainer M. Domingo

AN INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF COMPUTER software vendors has called on the local central senate industry to drum sentimental program despite showing confidence that software piracy would further decline from the current rate of 71 percent.

Adrian S. Crisobal Jr., Director General of the International Property Office, and officials of the Business Software Alliance met with him and asked for continued support for the group's ongoing campaign against software piracy.

Crisobal said BSA specifically asked the IPO and its parent agency, the Department of Trade and Industry, to intervene in the use of illegal software among call center players and other industry investments.

He said Hilda director for anti-piracy in Asia, Tarun Sawney, informed him that although a memorandum of agreement has been signed between the BSA and the Contact Center Association of the Philippines (CCAP) last June, about half of CCAP's members have not complied with the agreement.

The BSA committed CCAP members to "legalize" the software that they were using, one way of which was to draw panel that their programs were licensed.

Last May BSA announced that the software piracy rate in the Philippines went down 1 percentage point to 71 percent in 2004.

However, BSA data show that losses due to software piracy increased to $69 million or P3.7 billion from $56 million.

According to BSA Philippines' Ronald Chua, the country remains to have one of the highest piracy rates in the Asia Pacific region.

Still, BSA expressed confidence that the use of unlicensed software would drop following the launch of the Philippine Anti-Piracy Team in August.

Cebu Pacific offers ₱1,999 fare for HK

CEBU PACIFIC (CEB), THE AIRLINE UNIT OF J.G. Summit Holdings Inc., is offering its 'Go' fares for Manila-Hong Kong flights beginning tomorrow for travel starting Jan. 9 next year.

Namo-tasan at P1,999, an 60 percent drop from current fare.

"After rolling out the 'Go' fares on CEB's domestic routes, we are now ready to offer it to our regional sectors," said CEB General Manager Candido Pabalan. "We are the country's first low-cost carrier and we are committed to continue giving the Filipino public low fares."

"We hope that this will also allow more overseas Filipino workers based in Hong Kong to come home and see their families more often, and for those who can't come home, perhaps the 'Go' fares will allow their families to visit them in Hong Kong instead" he said.

The Manila-Hong Kong route will be serviced by CEB's new 168-seater Airbus A319. CEB operates eight daily flights to Hong Kong with the morning flight leaving Manila at 8 am and arriving in Hong Kong at 10am. The afternoon flight leaves Manila at 4:30 p.m. arriving Hong Kong at 6:40p.m.

"With these year-round fares, we urge everyone to plan and book their trip ahead of time. It's never too early to buy your tickets for travel in 2006," Pabalan said.

"CEB is all about offering choices. If traveling on business and your plans may change, get the Flexi fare, which allows you to change your schedule at no charge," he said. "If changes to your plans aren't likely to happen, then get a 'Go' fare which requires a 48 hour notice for changes prior to departure with payment of applicable fees."

The airline recently opened its first regional office in Incheon, Hong Kong to facilitate ticket sales and travel to/from.

CEB's HK office will also be used to boost the airline's promotion and marketing efforts in SE, China, Macau, Taiwan and Japan.

CEB pioneered low fares in the country in March 1996, forcing other airlines to do so, too.

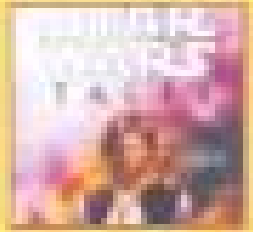
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

LIFESTYLE

YOUR CHRISTMAS GIFT CATALOGUE PART 2

Last week we tried to help you in your quest to fill stockings by presenting ideas for the different people in your life.
Because we know your holiday shopping isn't done yet, we have more gift ideas in this second installment of your 2bU! Christmas Catalogue.

This week we have gift ideas for music lovers, comic-book fans, makeup mavens, accessories collectors, Havaianas addicts, uniform junkies, shutterbugs and people who refuse to grow up.
We applaud your desire to play Santa for the people you love. Happy shopping!



For the accessories lover

Go for sparkling accessories and glittering gems in this season of shimmer

By Paru Pathak

THIS CHRISTMAS, YOUR ACCESSORIES-loving friend deserves only the best. The Fashion Freako brand hear young designers who create art for wearing. Nothing mass-produced here—only pieces lovingly handcrafted for your diverse thinking freak.

Wishes and Daydreams

CHAINED: Candles—Sprinkles

PUNCH

WATERMELON

BERRIES

Pitch Pluto for Life

SUGAR Rush

SPARKLE

JEWELRY with precious-looking names

Fiends Jen, Steph, Mimi, Mitch and Kim make magic with their hands. The crew knotted wire, colour—the stuff smiles and daydreams are made of. Rave the names stand among Tim here Chained Candles which they describe as "a cluster of chains, charms and a handful of gloves and acrylic beads." Price for Chained Candles start at ₹750. Long necklaces called Medley go for ₹200, while three-strand ones could be bought for ₹300. Use-it-about Charm bracelets cost ₹350 to ₹550.

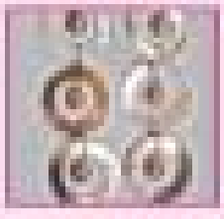
People who love earrings will be pleased to know that Trinkets and Baubleware has unique offerings—even pairs with crochet details. There's surely a pair your sculpture would fall in love with—Cotton drop earrings (₹500), Rhinestone Earrings, which the girls describe as "large round blingy things" (₹350), Sprinkle Earrings (₹550), and Crystal Dilliers and Risk Seekers, which are wooden-and-chain earrings (₹650). If your friend doesn't have pierced ears, no worries. The girls from Pitches and Baubleware make lovely clip-on earrings called Super Rocks for ₹375.

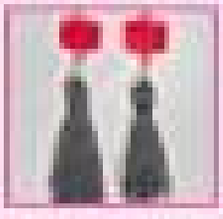
The prices for this dress ("Big chain necklaces with random beads and trinkets") were at ₹900, while Hollowers ("Old utensils of unmatched shapes, a variety of faux pearls and chains"), which can be used as a belt or as other chunky bracelet, is sold at ₹450.

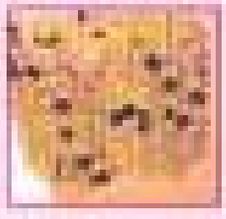
Sue, Steph, Mimi, Mitch and Rose also make customised jewellery sculptures, which they call Made Made. Clients can provide their own trinkets and request for the girls to stitch old jewellery pieces or baubles in their unique creations.

Out-of-a-Kind pieces are available at I Love You more, "NKN Underground Flea Place, Mahadevapura, Whitefield, Bangalore, open on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 10 midnight. For orders and inquiries, visit www.whitefieldflea.com or www.facebook.com/whitefieldflea, and call 9972-9900 or 9972-3040.

Patina







Rs Aneesa has taken a break from corporate work to making jewelry. Her passion for creating accessories has gotten good feedback from her friends, colleagues and relatives, who were her first clients.

Her brand, Rasasa, has a lot to offer lovers of accessories. Bracelets are sold at ₹400 to ₹1,200, necklaces at ₹600-₹1,200 while ear earrings go from ₹200 to ₹800. "It depends on the size and type of jewelry," she said.

She knows that keeping the balance between affordability and quality is key. "I try to keep the prices low so it's affordable for everyone, but it doesn't affect the good materials."

With several collections already under her belt, she still has no plans of stopping. And why should she? With her various designs that range from gems and gels to wild and chunky, she has customers that would please people with different tastes and personalities.

Recently, she also discovered that many girls love studs to wear to their parties. "I have come up with some pieces for people who love to wear studs earlier. But they want to accessorise. Since they're studs-to-suits, for sure they will be accessorising."

Whether you like a piece from one of the collections or have jewelry custom-made for your loved one, you're going for a piece of art that she can wear all year long.

For orders and inquiries, e-mail rasasa.rajan@gmail.com or call 9972-8808766.

Kitsch Corner

KITSCH Corner's trainers with bangles allow you to mix and match your favourite colours and styles.

Managers at Ice Boxes, who sold cocktail-in-a-mason jars bangles and accessories, was a big success at last year's Diwali bazaar.

"With single bracelets made of coiled wire and glass-eyed beads, could be only ₹50 each or ₹200 for a set of four. We gave a choice to customers to mix and match their favourite colours and pieces.

The bracelets sold on various outings that we did earlier. Even recipients can pick those out or wear a few at a time depending on her mood.

We also had bangles in prints, colours which we sold from ₹200 to ₹350. We offer big handfuls of designs. Bangalore makers were the best bracelets which are stylish and very personable.

Watch out for more accessories from this crowd-loving designer.

For orders, contact Manasa Murugh 9177[illegible] or e-mail manasamurugh@yahoo.com

Katharig Kamay

Mommy Ging doesn't just make jewelry. she designs clothes. A graphic designer by day, Ming has a budding passion for creating accessories that just cannot be ignored. Known for her suppa-size creations, she likes using metal, her chosen medium which seeming by an electric fan should Cubbo. "I love metal and I've always been interested and hooked for a supplier. Seeing that it is such a flexible material, I experimented and made it for jewelry set," hesitantly determined to an untrained mom with no recent unique accessories, she also recently started using resin to create jewelry and belts.

Ming expresses her gratitude to women who love her work.

"My fave clients who appreciated my kind of art include Ruby Gan, the fashionista businesswoman who also loves shelling; Jessa Epperson, EC Concepcion, Tiji Gramps, Anne Garcia, Pierre Evangelista, Celeste Legaspi and Angel Aquino. I adore Angel, she's such a beautiful inside and out."

But it's not just class. Because students, nursing, stand-ins and working women love all ethnic in love with her work.

Ming has an own-known for each of her creations. "I would like to call them as my masterpieces. I am hoping that my art would make me really proud to wear Pinoy jewelry as. Each piece is truly distinct."

She talked about her bestsellers. "The 'Indio' rings, the resin belt hooters which are multifunctional because they can also be worn as a neckpiece; my medallion necklace which can be worn as halo and my monochromatic earrings complete with watch and model like ones."

Since she started, she has sold over 10,000 pieces. And Ming remains passionate about her art, in fact, she has a lot of plans, including coming out with a line of accessories for men. "My vision for Katharig Kamay is to have appearances of our own

HERE these just are Ming Ging of Katharig Kamay makes unique jewelry using unusual materials.

jewelry on industry among Pilipinos." She also intends to promote appreciation for Pilipino art on a global scale—in fact, Katharig Kamay is now being sold in Spain and Europe.

Ming's love for art goes beyond just her own craft. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in fine arts in UP and is putting a project to spur the growth and development of the Philippine jewelry industry.

This Christmas, when you fill someone's stocking with pieces from Katharig Kamay, you are more than just giving them accessories. You are giving them a gift of passion, a gift of art.

Katharig Kamay is available at Rok, Ming Magoon (SM CEB Loop, Paseo Center, Greenhills, and Rockwell), Anne Medrano, House of Laurel and Clover Deluxe. For customized pieces, e-mail vmae_ph@yahoo.com.

Havaianas alert!

By Pam Pastor

Good rubber, that time-tested, out-of-the-house arrival is now on sale, just in time for your Christmas shopping!

Just when we're expecting boots to have the runway wholly booked on their behalf, the flip-flop, Asia's most iconic of rubber, is on the

Flip-flop is not your whole piece over chocolate-smelling beach—already. Anyone got over here now. Havaianas got comfortable and cool, available at SM Flip Flop in Galleria 3.

Havaianas are available at All Flip Flops Asia Alabang in Rockwell Power Plaza. Runs from Christmas Clothing Co. branches

Caffeine and then some

By Pam Pastor

When strenuous postures in chair and yoga, you know Christmas can't too far away.

Aside from offering special Christmas beverages (Cocoa Bolder Latte, Toffee Nut Latte and Peppermint Mocha Latte, Peppermint Mocha Frappuccino and Peppermint Hot Chocolate) and festive Christmas food items (Gingerbread Loaf, Gingerbread Cookies, Eggnog Bread Pie and Starbucks Peppermint Brownies—it sounds!), your coffee hangout also becomes a shopping stop for gifts that your coffee-loving friends will love.

Let your loved one convert to home coffee) into a mini Starbucks by purchasing the Coffee Press Gift Pack. It contains everything you need for one cup of coffee—a special coffee measure and drawstring coffee press, a half-pound bag of ground Starbucks Christmas Blend coffee, a coral mug and four brown mugs.

You can also go for the Cocoa Trio, three flavors of Starbucks cocoa (chocolate, peppermint and cinnamon) which are packed in a festive tin.

Check out the Starbucks Christmas Traditions Gift Boxes, which are lined with three filled with different holiday treats—Chocolate Almond Strufle, Lemon Pear Honey Cookies, Hazelnut Meltaways, Gingerbread Cookies, Choco-Cinnamon Tea, Fruit Flower Cookies, Christmas Shortbread Cookies and Hazelnut Chocolate Chip Cookies.

If your friend is running errands, you can go for the Favorite Hits or the new Must Music CD compilation "Sleigh Full of Songs," which includes renditions of popular Christmas carols by artists like Brian Mcnight and Mel Tillis Orb.

If romance really, really special to you for your drinking coffee like candy to get that

HERE are traditional Cocoa every coffee lover will love.

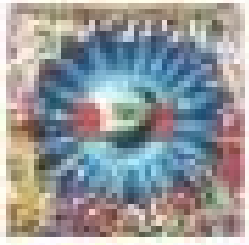
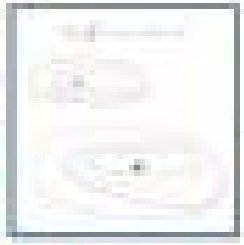
PEPPERMINT Mocha's our top choice.

FOOD lovers

BARISTAS

heart on the 2006 Limited Edition Starbucks Coffee Planner, why don't you love them to it? Buy a beautiful detail, and note-filling-in planner and with stickers. You will have a few weeks to redeem the planner. And it comes with a bonus: a dominoes Project Identifier, the Starbucks logo on for only—Sold Brand, cute and developmental partnership with Disney!

Here's a rundown of CDs you can give your loved ones this Christmas

NOT YOUR USUAL HOLIDAY MUSIC

By Ivana C. Perez

THE THREE REASONS why you should give CDs by local artists this Christmas:

One, it saves you time. It is way easier to buy a CD than pick a shirt (casual week or weekend? Checkered or striped? Plain? Cotton? Jersey?), a pair of shoes or earrings. Not to mention wrapping it in a breeze.

Two, you'll be able to support local artists—by buying the original ones, of course. These dudes are trying to make something out of the local music scene, and we listeners deserve more than another overplayed, ratcom machine will bite. We need more musical education other than Love Radio.

And, last, it's just we love to save up for an iPod 512 for Christmas. These CDs will do for now.

Here's a rundown of albums you could give your loved ones this Christmas. And oh, don't be scared to experiment. There is no such thing as too loud or too hardcore. You never might just be singing Bamboo in the shower, for all you know.

"Ultraelectromagneticjam"

Various artists, Sony Music

"Who didn't love the 90-something bands? Who didn't surrender when being an R-bands groupie?" This album, a project of radio station Jam 88.3, contains covers of 17 R-bands songs. There's a reggae version of "Mating Mode" by Brownman Revival, a mariachi "Superpowa" by Francis M. and a jazz-infused "Alkohol" by Radioactive Sago Project. Bamboo, Kitchie Nadal, Sponge Cola and Kiss J. Pasos (he did "Nag-iisang El Bimbo") don't join in the album. There we, say "We kid would love this album.

Give 'em to: Your brother or sister who once wore an I-heart-shirt but won't admit it.

"PDT Renascence"

PDT, EMI/Viva

"Who can forget the heavily censored, relentless Kool Bay singing "Tipsy-ops Ka" in the late '90s? The band found funk, soul and jazz, and provided more spunk to the alternative music scene. Some years later, these dudes sweated and tattooed with the songs from their new and only album and came up with the unexpected collection. Classics like "Pipes of War," "PTE," "Pulse-ate" and "Smuggling" are given twists by jamming musicians from other bands, like an old recipe with a new dressing. The new track "It Don't Matter" sure deserves a space on your mp3 player.

"PDT Renascence" brings you good ol' rock-and-roll nostalgia. If you were ever a fan before, this album would make a convert out of you.

Give 'em to: Your dad, your yuppie sister who once danced like Pete, a younger brother who didn't know the band.

"Embrace"

Urbandub, EMI/Viva

The Cebu-based rock band signed up under a major label for "Embrace" after independently releasing two earlier albums—"Salbakuto" and "Rebirth," which was album of the Year in the 2004 HR Rock Awards.

Many further anyone overuse "edgy," take time to listen to this album. Frontman Gabby Alipe penned most of the songs which are, this time, more emotional than the band's earlier pieces. Fave tracks are "Bird the Answer," "When I Senses Die," "Reveal the Butterfly" and "Pain of Tomorrow." Give this album as a gift and we why Urbandub has been called "the great band from Cebu."

Give 'em to: Your boyfriend, best pal, practically anyone who appreciates good rock music.

"Comet's Tail"

Cynthia Alexander

Singer-songwriter Cynthia Alexander's music brings you where it is dreamy, dazzling, even magical. Highly influenced by Indian religion, ballads and music box songs from that Hollywood look as in, waltz, dance permanence and guitar riffs. "Comet's Tail" is Cynthia's third baby released roughly five years after her "Slipping Into" album. Check out earlier single "Comet's Tail," "Bungalow Blue" and "Maya." Cynthia's lyrics may not necessarily be poetry, but they were are both.

Give 'em to: Your mom, your fave prof or teen, your best friend, anyone who's into world music. Deb and Cheese would!

"Far Side of the World"

Imay, Terno Recordings

After a five-track EP, Imay finally released its full-length album, "Far Side of the World," one of the best alternative releases released by a Pinoy group.

"Alternative? Here will rap-hop is a novel sub-genre that merges hip-hop beats and electronica. If hip-hop is for dancing and electronica is for clubbing, rap-hop is, paranoid-ics, a musical union that makes you want to lounge or make out. Get instantly by the early singing of vocalist Bing Calma, while world mixing champion Ian Magtalas and programmer Mabs Lopez takes care of the rhythms.

Give 'em to: Your lover or couch who's not really into "indie music." It's the perfect you want to share a couch with.

"Moonbow show"

Rockstrumm, Universal Records

If you want to be perky as in "Bubble Gang" happy, pop in Rockstrumm's "Moonbow Show" CD. Jack all your chest and bounce all over your room. The first song already has that effect. It makes you giddy.

"Moonbow show" plays up on the usual Pinoy humor, with song titles like "Pretending to Pretending," "Crossover Number One" and "Wala Pang Pamasang Magandang Sa 'Di Gasabot Song." "Moonbow Show" is a happy gift in CD form. Take it whenever you need a lift.

Give 'em to: The funniest or goofiest person you know. It's an upper that works wonders.